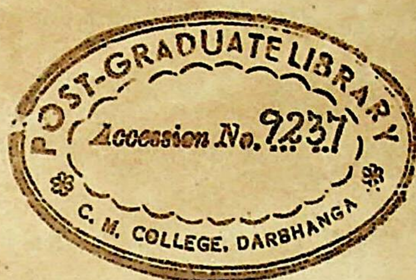
A STUDY OF VAISNAVISM IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL BENGAL

—UPTO THE ADVENT OF CHAITANYA

(Based on Archaeological & Literary Data)

Dr. S. C. MUKHERJI


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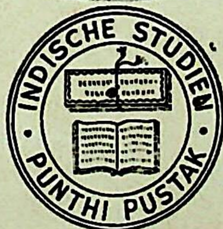
—UPTO THE ADVENT OF CAITANYA

(Based on Archaeological & Literary Data)

By

S. C. MUKHERJI, M.A., D.PHIL.

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PUNTHI PUSTAK

CALCUTTA : 1966

Published by—
Sri Sankar Bhattacharya,
Punthi Pustak,
34 Mohan Bagan Lane.
Calcutta-4.

1st Edn. October 1966

Printed at Calcutta Oriental Press (Pvt.) Limited. 9, Panchanon Ghose Lane, Calcutta-9.

Dedicated to

My Departed Father

Late Pulin Bihari Mukherji

FOREWORD

The author of this book S. C. Mukherji, M.A., D.Phil., was one of my former students in the post-graduate classes of the University of Calcutta. He worked on Vaiṣṇavism in ancient and medieval Bengal under my guidance in the Asiatic Society as its James Prinsep Research Fellow (1955-58). Some unavoidable circumstances stood in the way of his submitting the thesis entitled, 'A Study of Vaiṣṇavism in Ancient and Medieval Bengal (upto pre-Caitanya times)' in time. His earnest and conscientious labour, however, bore fruit and brought him the reward; he was admitted to the D. Phil. (Arts) degree in 1964 on the basis of his aforesaid thesis.

Socio-religious condition of ancient and medieval India was being studied by eminent scholars for a long time, and many of their contributions were published earlier. But, comparatively few scholars engaged themselves in the past with religious history of ancient and medieval Bengal. Mention may, however, be made in this connection of the scholarly publications of some eminent writers, such as D. C. Sen, M. T. Kennedy and S. K. De, but their works are mostly confined to the studies on Bengal Vaiṣṇavism connected with the movement sponsored by Caitanya and his followers. Dr. Mukherji, on the other hand, took up the history of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism of the pre-Caitanya period as the subject of his research, though for its proper rounding up he had also said something about the Caitanya movement.

As a student of ancient Indian history and culture as well as archaeology, Dr. Mukherji's approach to the subject has been mainly historical, and his work is based on literary as well as on archaeological data.

A systematic as well as a detailed treatment of the aforesaid topic was still a desideratum, and it may frankly be stated that the present work has fulfilled it to a great extent.

For the sake of convenience Dr. Mukherji has divided his thesis into six well-balanced chapters and two appendices. The treatment of the topic has been scientific and critical, and its speedy publication will undoubtedly remove a long-felt want in the field of research.

Dated the 12th June, 1965. J. N. BANERJEA

PREFACE

Being advised by my teacher, Dr. J. N. Banerjea, (since dead), the then Carmichael Professor and Head of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta, to take up the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal for my advanced studies and research, I began my researches on *Vaiṣṇavism in Ancient and Medieval Bengal*, chiefly on the basis of *archaeological data* supplementing them with available *literary records* both in Sanskrit and Bengali. I have endeavoured in my present thesis for D. Phil. Degree in Arts (C.U.) to afford evidence of originality by 'making a critical analysis of facts and also by establishing relations between facts discovered by others.'

Many illustrious scholars like Colebrooke, Wilson, Weber, Lassen, Bühler, Barth, Garbe, Grierson, Hopkins, Carpenter, Keith, Schrader, Gonda, R. G. Bhandarkar, T.A.G. Rao, R. P. Chanda, D. C. Sen, H. C. Raichaudhuri, S. K. De, J. N. Banerjea, N. K. Bhattasali, P. C. Bagchi, N. R. Roy, D. C. Sircar, Sukumar Sen, S. B. Dasgupta, Biman Bihari Majumdar, Mrinal Dasgupta and B. Kakati studied various aspects of Vaiṣṇavism in a general way or other; I have often referred to their views, and reasons have often been adduced by me, whether I accepted or rejected them.

I have approached the subject chiefly as a student of ancient history and archaeology. The importance of archaeological data in determining the socio-religious history of any particular class of the people or sect cannot be underestimated, and I have endeavoured to throw some new light on the state of *Vaiṣṇavism in Ancient and Medieval Bengal* mainly from that point of view.

The socio-religious history of Bengal is yet to be written, and archaeological researches will throw much light on that aspect of the history of the people, but its main source must

be found in the ancient literature and folklore, current among the people. A systematic as well as detailed study of the subject incorporating both the topics has been a desideratum, and I have spared no pains to present necessary facts in a logical manner.

I have made every effort to make a critical study of the Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal from the earliest times down to the age of Caitanya. Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal cannot be studied isolated from Vaiṣṇavism in general, which is still a living religion of the teeming millions of India.

It is a mistake to think of Caitanya in any sense as the real originator of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal, for the Faith had had its adherents here from much earlier times. Some of the chief literary figures of Bengal drew their inspiration from the Vaiṣṇava texts; while writing the present dissertation I have kept in mind their particular contributions.

In the *first chapter* of the thesis, I have tried to describe the early history of Vaiṣṇavism down to the post-Gupta period. In the *next chapter*, I have given in outline the prevailing religious condition during the reign of the Pālas and other minor royal dynasties of contemporary Bengal. A survey of Vaiṣṇavism (including the literary aspects) during the Sena epoch has been made in the *third chapter*. *Chapter four* has been entirely devoted to the life and work(s) of Jayadeva. In the *next chapter*, a fairly detailed survey of some of the Sanskrit and Vernacular works of medieval Bengal (with special references to the works of Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa, Mālādhara Vasu and Vidyāpati) has been made. The socio-religious condition of Bengal at the time of the advent of Caitanyadeva and the main traits of *Caitanyaism* have been delineated in *chapter six*. There are *two appendices* to the present thesis—one devoted to the cult of Rādhā, and the other to the iconographic study of the Viṣṇuite images as found in Bengal.

It has been my aim to make a general study of the development of different aspects of Vaiṣṇavism from the earliest

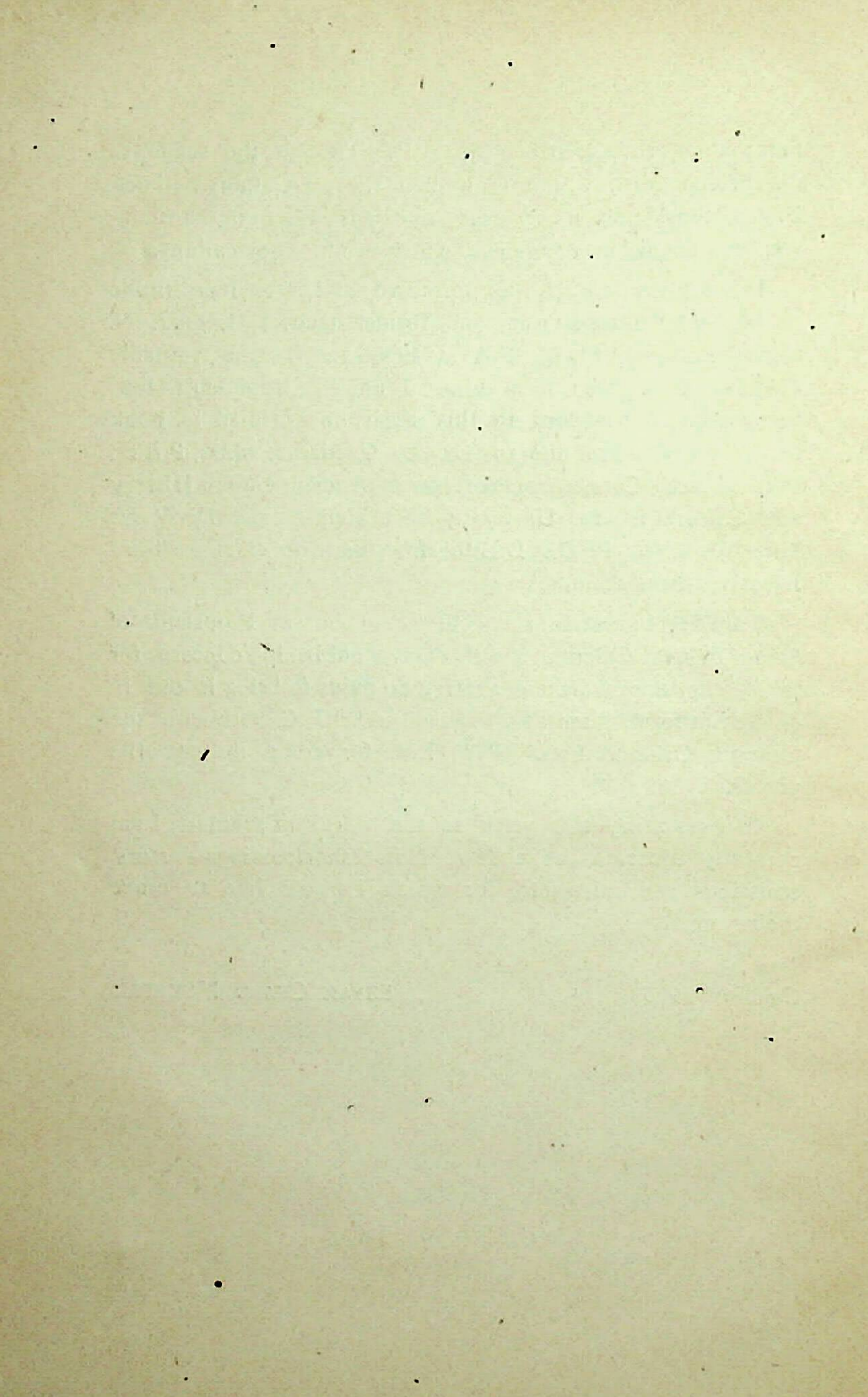
times down to the 15th century A.D. Though the scope of the present disquisition is limited to pre-Caitanya times, I have considered it necessary to discuss at length the socio-religious conditions of the age, which produced Śrīcaitanya.

It is a pleasant obligation to record my heart-felt gratitude to my scholar-supervisor and former teacher, Late J. N. Banerjea, M.A., Ph.D., F.A.S., F.N.S.I., for the valuable guidance I received from him. I am also beholden to him for writing a foreword to this thesis now printed in book form. Thanks are due to Dr. D. C. Sircar, M.A., P.R.S., Ph.D., F.A.S., Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture in the University of Calcutta and Dr. V. V. Mirashi, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., for the helpful suggestions I received from them.

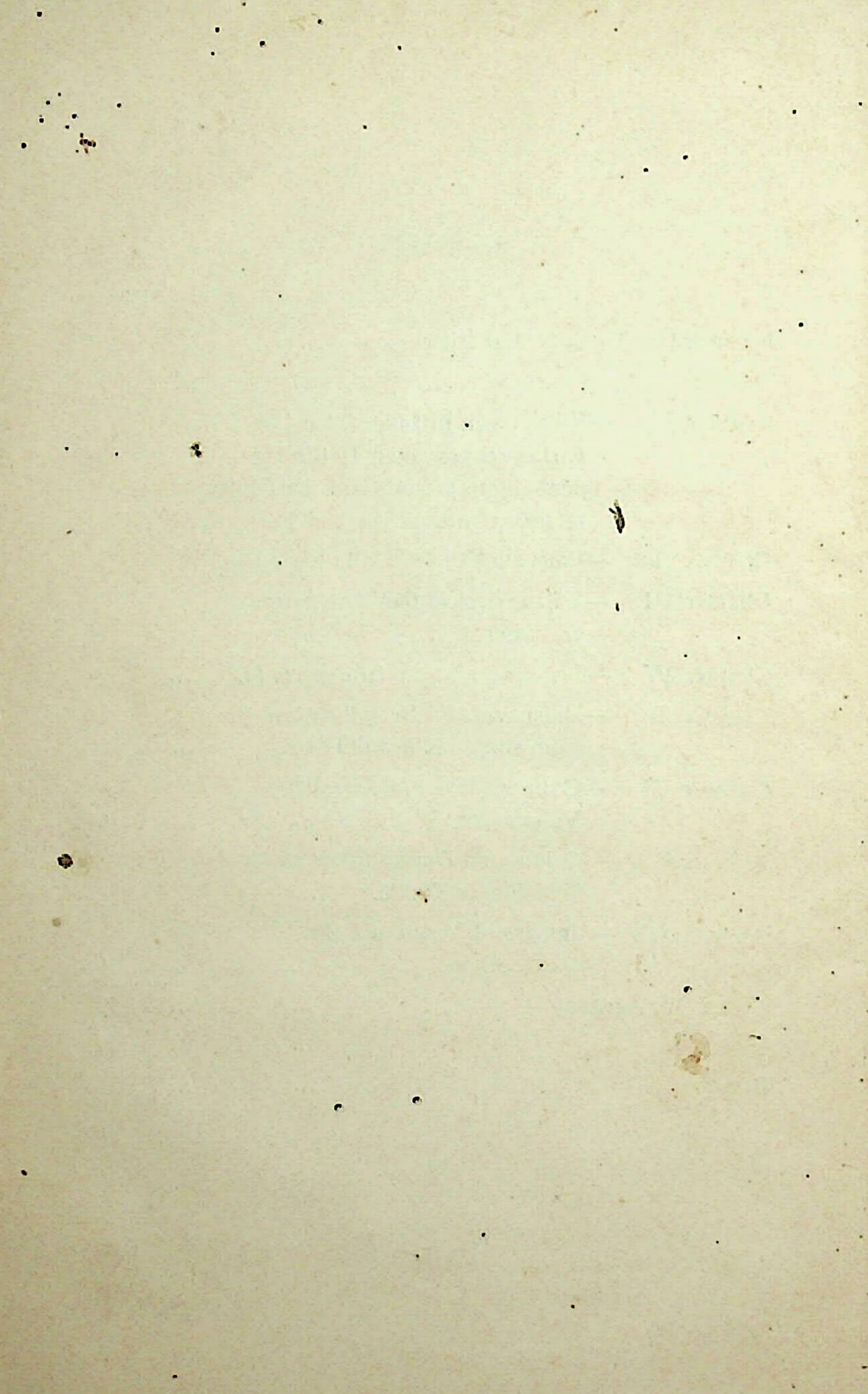
I am deeply grateful to Sri S. Bhattacharya, Proprietor of *Punthi Pustak*, Calcutta, a well-known publishing concern, for taking up this work and sparing no pains to bring it out in its present form. I am also indebted to Sri J. C. Sarkhel of the Calcutta Oriental Press (Pvt.) Ltd. for going through the proofs.

In presenting this work to the world of scholars, I am painfully conscious of a few of its shortcomings—errors, omissions and misprints, for which I would like to crave their sympathy.

Calcutta, 1966. SHYAM CHAND MUKHERJI



CONTENTS



CHAPTER I

VAIṢṆAVISM IN INDIA FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES DOWN TO THE POST-GUPTA PERIOD (WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO BENGAL).

A. *Vaiṣṇavism in India during pre-Gupta times*

Vaiṣṇavism is one of the most important as well as popular Brāhmanical cults that came into existence some centuries before Christ. As the name implies, 'Vaiṣṇavism' means the particular theistic religion of which Viṣṇu is the object of worship as the Supreme Deity.

The word 'Vaiṣṇavism' attaches peculiarly and prominently to the 'cult of Viṣṇu' in the much developed phase of its history and not in its earlier stages. The word 'Vaiṣṇava' appears for the first time in the latest part of the *Mahābhārata* (evidently added at a later date), and that too for three times only—and possibly not without any particular sectarian bias.[1] Its appearance as a sectarian term for the first time is possibly found in the coins and inscriptions of the Traikūṭaka rulers in *circa* 5th century A. D.[2]

It appears from a study of the *Vedas*, specially the *Ṛgveda* that Viṣṇu was a great god even in the earliest *Vedic* times, though he was not conceived as the Supreme God or the God of Gods.[3] But, the germ of the later greatness of Viṣṇu as well as some important aspects of the cult centring round him can be traced back to the *Ṛgveda*, where expressions like 'Urukrama', 'Trivikrama' and 'paramaṁ padam' occur.[4] These 'three steps' of Viṣṇu led to the growth of the myth relating to the fifth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, i.e. Vāmana—Trivikrama in later times.

A very distinctive feature of Vaiṣṇavism was the 'concept of Bhakti', or supreme devotion. The word 'Bhakti' first appears in the later *Vedic* texts (e.g. *Yasya deve parābhakti*

in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI. 23). From this time onward, references to *Bhakti* become clearer and clearer ; and Pāṇini in the several *sūtras* of his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* lays down rules for various word-formations in which the etymological sense of the word '*Bhakti*' is the central idea.[5] The *Śāṇḍilya Sūtram* (*I. 1. 2.*) defines '*Bhakti*' as '*parānuraktirīśvare*'.[6] The word '*Bhakti*' in the technical sense is nowhere employed in the *Vedic Saṁhitās*.

According to Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, 'the idea of a God of Grace, the doctrine of Bhakti' which form the salient features of Vaiṣṇavism, are not very conspicuous in the Viṣṇu-worship of the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇas*, for Viṣṇu of the *Brāhmaṇas* is more intimately connected with '*Yajña*' than with '*Bhakti*' or '*Prasāda*'.[7]

Vaiṣṇavism is also called the 'religion of the Bhāgavatas', i.e., the worshippers of the Bhagavat, the Lord, the Blessed or the Adorable One—their earliest religious text-book being the *Bhagavad-gītā*. There is epigraphic evidence to show that the *Bhāgavata* (or *Bhakti*) school existed long before the beginning of the Christian era. From a study of the epigraphic records of *circa* 2nd-1st century B. C., we come to know that the *Bhāgavatas* were the *Bhaktas* of Vāsudeva (cf. the *Besnagar inscriptions*, *Nāgari* or *Ghosuṇḍi inscription* and the *Nānāghāṭ inscription*).

The synonyms of the word '*Bhāgavata*' are given thus in the *Pādma Tantra*:

Sūri, Suhṛd, Sātvata, Pañcakālavit, Ekāntika, Tanmaya and Pañcarātrika. Of these, only four, viz. Bhāgavata, Sātvata, Ekāntika and Pañcarātra are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (cf. the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Śānti Parva* and *Viśvopākhyāna* section of the *Bhīṣma Parva*).

From a study of the epic literature, it is clear that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa (the Sātvata-Vṛṣṇi hero), round whom *Bhāgavatism* centred, was at the root of the 'cult of *Bhakti*' that came to be designated as 'Vaiṣṇava' at a comparatively

late stage of its growth, its earlier names being Ekāntika, Pañcarātra, Sātvata, Bhāgavata etc.

It is a known fact that the *Vedic* conception of the solar god Viṣṇu and the *Brāhmaṇical* one of the cosmic god Nārāyaṇa were merged in that of the hero-god Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the epic; and thus formed the composite cult-picture in the developed phase of the cult.[8]

It is not clear how Viṣṇu, whether *Vedic* or *Brāhmaṇic*, could be connected with an entirely new system of theistic devotion for a personal god, and identified with Nārāyaṇa or Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. It may be surmised that due to the fortuitous circumstances Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa were independently raised to the supreme divinity, and thus as a matter of course were equalised by a mysterious process of religious syncretism. Mutual compromise may be suggested. But the connecting links are unfortunately missing—only surmise, but no definite solution of the problem is possible. At first this theistic religion was described by such names as Ekāntika, Pañcarātra, Bhāgavata etc., and was not recognised by the orthodox people of the Brāhmandom at its earlier stages. At a slightly later date these people, possibly belonging to the priestly class, accepted Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, originally an Āditya, with a view to gaining the sympathy of the *Pañcarātrins.*[9] Again, in the personality of the former (Viṣṇu) was merged the entity of the cosmic god, viz. Nārāyaṇa, who appears in some late *Vedic* verses, *Brāhmaṇas* and some *Smṛti* texts. To these three elements, viz. Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the consequence of whose amalgam was the great 'creed of *Bhakti*' (called as Bhāgavatism, and later on as Vaiṣṇavism), was added a fourth one, viz. Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa element (this has been suggested by Sir R. G. Bhandarkar).[10]

Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, the Sātvata hero, stood really at the root of this '*Bhakti* cult'. The Sātvata hero with some of his relations, Saṁkarṣaṇa (elder brother), Pradyumna (eldest

son by Rukmiṇī), Śāmba (son by Jāmbavatī) and Àniruddha (son of Pradyumna) came to be deified by his followers and admirers. In the cult, that grew around him, he and his relations were at first assigned the position of the hero-gods, the 'holy' *Pañcavīras* of the Vṛṣṇi clan; but later on, Śāmba was eliminated from this list, and the remaining four were regarded as typifying the different aspects of the one great god—*Para* Vāsudeva. The systematizers of the cult-tenets did not take much time in transforming the *vīra* concept about the central deity and some of his relations into the *Vyūha* or emanation concept. To this was added the *Vibhava* or incarnation concept of the principal cult-god Vāsudeva, identified with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, in the beginning of the Christian era. According to the re-orientated ideology of the cult, the one God Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa could be conceived in his five-fold aspects or forms, viz. *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin* and *Arcā*.

The earliest definite reference to devotion to and worship of a personal god out of which Bhāgavatism-Vaiṣṇavism arose, may be traced in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (*circa* 5th century B.C.). The statements of the Greek writers like Megasthenes and Q. Curtius that the Sourasenoi (i.e., the people of the Mathurā region) held Herakles (or Herkules) (according to Q. Curtius, identifiable with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa)[12] in special honour, go to prove that at least the people around Mathurā were the votaries of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. The deification of the latter was perhaps complete by the second century B.C. at the latest, for an inscription on a Garuḍa pillar at Besnagar[13] (Khambaba) refers to a Greek envoy, Heliodoros by name, as a devotee of Vāsudeva, 'the God of Gods' (*Bhāgavata*). Some late inscriptions also go to prove the existence of devotees of Vāsudeva (-Kṛṣṇa).

Epigraphic records of the pre-Christian period as well as of the early centuries of the Christian era mention the existence of the *Bhāgavata* shrines in various parts of India, such as Vidiśā (Besnagar), Mathurā etc.

Very early extant images of Viṣṇu are rare. However one or two stone images of Vaiṣṇavite order can be dated probably to the 2nd century B.C., if not earlier. Images of Viṣṇu, belonging to the early centuries of the Christian era, are also not numerous ; and those few images also come from the Mathurā region, traditionally associated with the worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Inscriptions belonging to these periods refer to the constructions of the *Bhāgavata* shrines. The *Besnagar 'group of' inscriptions* go to suggest that there were excellent temples with enshrined objects of worship, possibly the images of god Vāsudeva or his emanatory forms, *in situ*. Votive columns connected with *Bhāgavatism*, viz. the *garuḍa, makara* and the *tāla* capitals, associated with Vāsudeva, Pradyumna and Saṁkarṣaṇa respectively, have also been found in this region.[14]

The *Nāgarī inscriptions* of *circa* 2nd-1st century B. C. refers[15] to a shrine of the two gods Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva along with a stone enclosure for the place of worship, called the *Nārāyaṇa-vāṭikā*, which according to Dr. Banerjea, stands for a temple[16] of the aforesaid gods (Vāsudeva and Saṁkarṣaṇa) with their respective icons therein. It may also refer to the aniconic worship of the deities. The *Pabbhosā inscription*[17], *Nānāghāṭ inscription*[18] and the *Morā Well inscriptions*[19] are more or less *Bhāgavata* in character. The *Mathurā stone inscription*[20] of the time of Śoḍāsa refers amongst others to a *devakula* at *Mahāsthāna* of *Bhagavat* Vāsudeva, which according to R. P. Chanda[21], was probably the birth-place of Kṛṣṇa. The *Burhikhar Viṣṇu Image inscription* (*cir.* 1st cent. B.C.) shows that there was a Vaiṣṇavite religious establishment at Malhār region in the M. P. even in the pre-Christian times.[22]

During the Saka-Kuṣāṇa times the influence of *Bhāgavatism* (Vaiṣṇavism) was as strong in India as ever. The divine power and heroic feats of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa were extolled everywhere and demonstrated through sculptural and iconic representations as evidenced in the 'Kṛṣṇa-

Govardhanadhara' panel from the Mathurā region, interesting carvings of the *līlās* of Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa at Tumain and in a figure of four-armed Viṣṇu from Hāṅkrāil in District Malda, now in West Bengal[23]. The *Bhāgavatas* or *Pāñcarātrins* might also have been mainly responsible for introducing image-worship among the higher section of the orthodox people.

Representations of the cult-god Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu are also found in some coins of the 'Pañcāla' Mitra king, Viṣṇumitra (*circa* 1st century B.C.), as also of the Kuṣāṇa king Huviṣka of a later date (*circa* 2nd century A.D.). In one of the copper coins of the latter, the figure of a four-armed deity appears on the *reverse* with an associated legend in cursive Greek, read as 'Oosno', i.e. Viṣṇu. In passing a reference may be made to a 'nicolo' seal, bearing the figure of a four-armed deity, which was wrongly attributed by Cunningham to king Huviṣka, for it really belonged to an unknown Hephtalite-Hūṇa chief of *circa* 5th century A.D. The deity was identified by Cunningham as Viṣṇu, but Ghirshman's correct reading of the legend leaves no doubt that the four-armed god was a syncretic form of Viṣṇu, Sūrya and Śiva[23].

It appears from the above that *Bhāgavatism* had its adherents among a considerable portion of the Indian masses in the Śaka-Kuṣāṇa times. From that time onward this popular religious system went on exerting its influence on the Indian people and later on merged into Vaiṣṇavism. *Bhāgavatism* long awaited the royal patronage of the *paramabhāgavata* Imperial Guptas to give it a lead so that it could develop into one of the most important branches of Brāhmaṇical religious system.

In the opinion of Dr. P. C. Bagchi the composite cult of Vaiṣṇavism, formed through syncretism of various cults and perceptible in Guptan *Bhāgavatism*, was established in Bengal in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.[24]

B. *Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta Period*

A thorough survey of the archaeological as well as literary data of the Gupta period would show that it was essentially one of religious harmony and toleration as Jainism, Buddhism and Brāhmanism, the three principal religious systems, flourished side by side. The spread of influence of each, however, varied much in extent. In the present context it will only be necessary for us to note the territorial spread of the religion of *Bhāgavatism*-Vaiṣṇavism.

In the religious movements of the Gupta period the *paurāṇic* deities were gradually given prominence. Of the three deities comprising the Trinity, the two, viz. Viṣṇu and Śiva, gradually overshadowed its premier member—Brahmā. Laudatory verses were composed in their favour and the religious texts of the period including the *purāṇas* are replete with them. Many of the *purāṇas* were also classified as Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva etc., according to the prominence given in them to these (*paurāṇic*) deities.

Vaiṣṇavism was a predominant aspect of Brāhmaṇical religion during this period. Some of the Gupta monarchs were devotees of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, and bore the title *parama-bhāgavata*. With the rise of the power of the Guptas, *Bhāgavatism* (almost synonymous now with Vaiṣṇavism), came to the foreground and spread to the remotest corners of India, including Bengal. Some of the Gupta monarchs were great champions of the religion of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. The patronage of this religion by the Imperial Guptas might have been the cause rather than the effect of the growing importance of the new religious creed in the Gupta period. Not only the royal Guptas, but other royal families also assumed the titles, *parama-bhāgavata*, and in some cases, *parama-vaiṣṇava*.

During the Gupta period the geographical orbit of Vaiṣṇavism extended remarkably on all sides. The epigraphic records connected with this cult are found in almost all the

provinces or states of India in those days, for example, at Udayagiri near Besnagar, Gaṅgdhār and Erān—all in Madhya Pradesh; Junāgaḍh in Gujrāt; Nāsik in Mahārāṣṭra; Aihole in Mysore; Bibbili in Andhra Pradesh; Allahabad, Bilṣāḍ, Karaṁdāṇḍā, Deogar and Bhitargāoṅ in Uttar Pradesh; Basārh and other places in Bihar; Dāmodarpur, Dhanāidaha, Bāigrām, Faridpur, Pāhāḍpur and Guṇaighar in Bengal. These are the places, which bear distinct evidence to show, that during the Gupta period Vaiṣṇavism made a notable progress.

The growing prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism in North India seems to be due to the efforts of the remodellers of the *purāṇas* also and quite a considerable number of such *purāṇas* describe Viṣṇu as the Highest God. Quite a fair number of epigraphic records of the period under review refer to the temples of Viṣṇu in his various forms or incarnations, such as Varāha, Vāmana, Nṛsiṁha, Dāśarathī-Rāma, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. These incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu were represented generally on stone-slabs or terra-cotta plaques. Sometimes they were represented on coins and seals also. A minor female deity, belonging to the pantheon of Viṣṇu, named Bhūdevī, appears side by side with Lakṣmī or Śrī in several records of East—Central India. The figure of Lakṣmī or Śrī, appearing on some coins of the Gupta kings, is also interesting. It may be surmised that in the Gupta period the cult of Śrī or Lakṣmī was merged with the cult of Viṣṇu (-Vāsudeva) under the influence of the '*Sāṁkhya* doctrine' of *Puruṣa-Prakṛti*, and thus gave rise to the neo-Vaiṣṇavism at a slightly later date.[25]

The Gupta age witnessed the evolution of neo-Vaiṣṇavism from the tribal form of *Bhāgavatism*, practised by the members of the Yādava-Sātvata-Vṛṣṇi clan.

The epigraphic records of the Gupta period refer to the close connection of *Bhāgavatism* with the *Yoga Philosophy*,[26] *Tāntricism* and 'Solar worship,' which is also noticed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Tuśām rock inscription*[27] of *circa* 4th century A.D. contains an adoration of Vāsudeva (-Viṣṇu) and men-

tions two reservoirs for the use of the *Bhagavat*, excavated by one Somatrāta, the great grandson of Yaśastrāta, who bore the epithet *Āryya-Sātvata-Yogācāryya-Bhagavad-bhakta*.[28] Another inscription of a fairly late date, i.e. the *Khoh c.p. inscription*[29] of Śarvanātha bearing the date as 193 of the *Gupta Samvat*, possibly throws some light on the close relation between *Bhāgavatism* and 'Solar worship' (cf. *Bhagavat-pādānām Āditsā(°tya)-bhaṭṭāraka-pādānāñca*) (*mandirayoḥ?*)[30] This inscription possibly shows that the same person erected two temples, dedicated respectively to *Bhagavān* (Viṣṇu?) and Āditya-bhaṭṭāraka (or Sūrya). Some scholars, however, would not see any such relation between the two modes of worship in the Gupta period; for, according to them, the Sun-god was not adored by the Vaiṣṇavas in the 5th century A. D. (as evidenced by the *Gaṅgdhār inscription* (vs. 21-22).[31] A study of the *Gaṅgdhār inscription* (v. 23) may show that the *Tāntric cult* of the mother-goddesses or *Mātṛkās* exerted some influence on Vaiṣṇavism.

It has been already remarked that the successive kings of the Gupta dynasty were the torch-bearers of the cult of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu (*Bhāgavatism*).

Though some of the Gupta monarchs professed the *Bhāgavata* form of Vaiṣṇavism, nothing can be said about the religious practices professed by the early rulers (of the Gupta dynasty). It is suggested that king Samudragupta was a Vaiṣṇava.[32] In the opinion of Dr. D. C. Sircar,[33] Samudragupta, though a Vaiṣṇava, was apparently not a *Bhāgavata*. There might have been some doctrinal differences between the faith of this king and *Bhāgavatism*, professed by his successors. This is indicated by the fact that his successors apply the epithet, *paramabhāgavata*, only to themselves and not to him. Some apocryphal texts and spurious copper plates ascribe the title of *parama-bhāgavata*[34] to this great Gupta monarch. Samudragupta has been represented in the *Allahabad Praśasti* as identical with the *Acintya Puruṣa*[35] (an epithet of lord Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa), 'who is the cause of the prosperity of the

pious and destruction of the wicked.' Here is an echo of *sl.* 8 of ch. IV of the *Gītā*. The epithet *lokadhāmno devasya*, ascribed to this king in the same inscription, probably hints at the conception of the Divine kings, as described in the *Manu Saṁhitā* (vs. 4-8, VII).[35a] In this connection the attention of scholars may be drawn to the *Ci-arutön inscription*[36] of *circa* 5th century A. D., where king Pūrṇavarman has been described as a Deified Being and placed on an equal footing with Viṣṇu. This probably refers to the *Devarāja cult*, which flourished in the Indian Archipelago.

So far as Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal is concerned, the first epigraphic record comes from Śuśuniā, Dt. Bankura, West Bengal. The *Śuśuniā rock inscription*,[37] issued by king Candravarman of Puṣkaraṇā (i.e., Pokharṇā, near Śuśuniā) who was probably a contemporary of Samudragupta, records the dedication of his work (*kṛti*)*-cakra* in the cave at Śuśuniā hill to Viṣṇu, the wielder of discus. This rock inscription belongs to *circa* 4th century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. King Candravarman calls himself 'the foremost of the servants of Cakkrasvāmin' (*cf. Cakkra-svāminaḥ dāsāgreṇātisṛṣṭaḥ*). Here, Cakrasvāmin stands for Viṣṇu. According to N. N. Vasu, 'the circle at the top with its adjuncts represented the bright wheel of Viṣṇu, whose name as Chakrasvāmin did actually appear at the commencement of the inscription'. He further observed that at the 'base of the hill there were pieces of some ancient sculptures, the present being that of the Narasiṁha incarnation of Vishṇu'.[38] But at the present stage of our knowledge we cannot say anything emphatically about this. We may, however, notice that Viṣṇu has been conceived here with '*cakra*' as his only attribute. Reference may also be made here to the *Viṣṇu cakra*, placed just below the *Tuśām rock inscription*, which according to Fleet, was nothing but a Buddhist '*Dharma cakra*'.[39] Candragupta II also issued the '*cakra-vikrama*' type of coins.[40] In later times, i.e. in the reign of Skandagupta, a temple of god of Viṣṇu was built under the name of Cakrabhṛt (wielder of discus) by Cakra-

pālita (a Vaiṣṇava name ?), son of a Governor of the king and a devotee of lord Govinda (-svāmin ?).[41] The *Thāp Musi inscription*[42] of Guṇavarman (*circa* 6th century A.D.), a king of Cambodia, refers to the establishment of a figure of lord Çakratīrthasvāmin, apparently a synonym of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. In the *Udayagiri cave inscription*[43] of Candragupta II (G. E. 82 = 401 A.D.) one Viṣṇudāsa, i.e. 'a slave of Viṣṇu' is mentioned. According to K. N. Dikshit, the *Śuśuniā record*[44] points to the fact that the village Dhoṣāgrāma (correctly *dāsāgreṇa*) was made over to Cakrasvāmin by king Candravarman.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the worship of lord Viṣṇu as the 'wielder of discus' was very popular in the Gupta period. Like Viṣṇu, his most perfect incarnation, Kṛṣṇa, also was conceived as Cakrabhṛt. In the *Mahābhārata* he is shown as a 'wielder of discus', the name of his particular discus being *Sudarśana*. So, it may not be wrong to surmise that during the Gupta period Kṛṣṇa was also worshipped under the name Cakrasvāmin or Cakrabhṛt.

The earliest definite reference to the worship of Viṣṇu in Bengal occurs possibly in the above-mentioned *Śuśuniā record*. It can be safely concluded from what has been stated above that the 'cult of Viṣṇu' made a strong appeal to the imperial house of the Guptas as well as to some 'independent rulers of (West) Bengal.

As regards the successors of Samudragupta, it may be mentioned that his son Candragupta II, was a devout worshipper of god Vāsudeva. He is styled as *paramabhāgavata* on his coins, as also in the inscriptions of his son and grandson, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta, respectively. The coins bear on the *reverse* a figure of Garuḍa with outstretched wings.

The *Cakravikrama* type of coins, issued by king Candragupta II is very interesting; for it decisively proves the Vaiṣṇavite leaning of the king. This unique coin represents on its *obverse* god Viṣṇu as standing on an elevated platform,

with a divine 'halo' round his body. The god is shown as holding a mace in his left hand, and 'three round objects' (obviously standing for three worlds) in the right, which he is about to bestow on the king. The *reverse* side, showing Lakṣmī, contains the legend *'Cakravikramaḥ'*. According to some scholars, the person standing before the king may be no other than Āyudha-puruṣa. But, Dr. Altekar has refuted it.[45]

Another inscription, issued by king Candra (generally identified with Candragupta II) and discovered at Meherauli, near Delhi, records that a pillar in honour of his *iṣṭadevatā*, Viṣṇu, was caused to be raised on the Viṣṇupāda hill by this illustrious king.[46] Himself a *paramabhāgavata* (i. e., a Vaiṣṇava), king Candragupta II was instrumental in popularizing *Bhāgavatism* (i.e., Vaiṣṇavism) among the royal personages and general populace of India. It was king Candragupta II, who caused the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II, a Śaiva, to accept Vaiṣṇavism by giving him in marriage with his daughter, Prabhāvatīguptā. The Vākāṭaka records of this period begins with the Vaiṣṇavite expression, *Jītam Bhagavatā*.[47] This expression is also found at the beginning of many records of this age, of which the *Penukoṇḍā plate* of Mādhava Gaṅga (*circa* 5th cent.) *Hebbaṭa grant* of Viṣṇuvarman I (Kadamba) and the *Pallava grants* (6th-7th cent.) need mention. Though a devout Vaiṣṇava, Candragupta II did not discourage the followers of other sects. The people and officers were also tolerant.

King Kumāragupta I, son and successor of Candragupta II, was possibly a *parama-bhāgavata*, for some of coins issued by him unmistakably attributed to him the aforesaid title. In the epigraphic records, however, the king has been styled *parama-daivata*, which according to Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, would stand for 'Supreme Divinity'.[48] It is to be considered, whether *parama-daivata* can be explained as 'a great devotee of the gods ; thereby suggesting that the king was probably a *Smārta*. That this king was also a devotee of god Kumāra-Kārttikeya, is shown by a number of his coins.

Like his father, Kumāragupta I was a tolerant king. During his reign the worship of Viṣṇu in various forms, of Śiva in the *liṅga* form, of Buddha and of Sūrya flourished peacefully side by side.

Not only the royal princes, but the common people also evinced a keen interest in the furtherance of this cult and vied with each other, so far as erection of temples and installation of images (therein) are concerned. The *Bāigrām copper plate inscription*[49] of the time of Kumāragupta I, for example, shows that Bhoyila and Bhāskara, inhabitants of villages Trivṛtā and Śrīgohālī (situated within Vāyigrāma, i. e. modern Baigrām in the E. P. district of Bogra) purchased both fallow and homestead lands in order to meet the expenses of repair-works to the temple and daily-worship of god Govindasvāmin, a form of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, therein (cf. *Bhagavato Govindasvāminaḥ devakulam* &c. 11. 4 ff.). The temple was founded by the donors' father Śivanandin. The grant was issued in the Gupta year 128, i. e. 448 A. D.

The existence of a temple dedicated to god Govinda-svāmin in the Gupta period has further been substantiated by the discovery of the remains (basement) of a temple at Bāigrām through archaeological excavations at the place. The excavations have exposed the remains of a brick temple. Like all typical Gupta temples, the shrine in question, probably consisted of a flat-roof and an outer enclosure serving as *pradakṣiṇa-patha* preceded by a 'maṇḍapa' in front. But, the arrangement of the roofs etc., according to Prof. S. K. Saraswati, is not clear. The temple in question has been assigned by the said scholar to the *Group B* of the Gupta temples.[50]

From a study of the above, it is apparent that the common people also bestowed gifts on Viṣṇu, the object of their devotion. Influence of Vaiṣṇavism is perceptible in personal names also. In order to illustrate this point we may refer to names like Devaviṣṇu, Viṣṇuchandra, Viṣṇudatta, Viṣṇubhadra, Viṣṇudevaśarmā, Viṣṇu Vardhaki, Viṣṇupālita,

Haritrāta, Cakrapālita, Varāhasvāmin, Rāmaka, Gopālasvāmin, Bhaṭṭa Gopāla and a host of others (cf. *Karaṃdāṇḍā, Dhanāidaha, Guṇāighar, Mallasārul* and *Faridpur copper plates* of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods).[51] Not only this, we have evidences to show that sometimes the successive members of the same family, having Vaiṣṇavite leaning, bore names ending with Viṣṇu. For example, we may refer to the *Erān stone pillar* inscription of Budhagupta (G. E. 165) and *Erān stone boar inscription* of Toramāṇa (reg. yr. 1), where names like Indraviṣṇu, Varuṇaviṣṇu, Hariviṣṇu, Mātṛviṣṇu and his brother Dhanyaviṣṇu occur in a successive order.[52] It is interesting to note that king Mātṛviṣṇu was an *atyanta-bhagavad-bhakta* (devoted to god Viṣṇu in his Janārddana and Varāha-Nārāyaṇa forms); Dhanyaviṣṇu, his younger brother, was also a Vaiṣṇava (cf. *tasyaivā-nujena tadanuvidhāyinā* in the aforesaid inscriptions). These evidences clearly show that by the 6th century A. D., if not earlier, some parts of India including the Northern and Eastern regions of Bengal had become familiar with the 'cult of Viṣṇu'.

The *Mandasore stone inscription*, dated in the *Mālava* year 461. i.e. 404 A.D., begins with an invocation to 'the thousand-headed Puruṣa', identified with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa (cf. *Sahasra-śirase tasmai Puruṣāyamitātmane*/etc. v. 1)[53]. In verses 10 and 11 of this inscription a reference has been made to the Viśvarūpa form of god Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa (cf. *Tridaśodāra-phaladaṁ*// *Vāsudevaṁ jagadvāsamapra-meyamajaṁ vibhum*// ; also *śaraṇyaṁ*, v. 10)[54]. This Vaiṣṇava record was issued by king Naravarman of Malwa. Like Naravarman, his son Viśvavarman was also a Vaiṣṇava. Mayūrākṣaka, the minister of king Viśvavarman, erected a temple of Viṣṇu in his '*Cakra-gadā-dhara*' form, probably at a place near Gaṅgdhār (cf...... *cakkra-gadā-dharasya*/v. 18 ; ......*Viṣṇo-sthānamakarāyad-Bhagava*)[55] ;

(*Ta-śśrī*) man-*Mayūrākṣakah*/v. 20) ; and the *Gaṅgdhār stone inscription* of the time of king Viśvavarman, dated in the *Mālava* year 480, i.e. 423 A.D., testifies to the same. In

verse 23 of this inscription it is said that a temple was erected by the said minister in honour of the Divine Mothers accompanied by the *Ḍākinīs* (cf. *Mātṛṇāñca ...... Tantrodbhūta......Ḍākinī-saṁprakīrṇṇam* etc., v. 23). This verse seems to show that Vaiṣṇavism of the Gupta period was somewhat influenced by the '*Tāntric* cult' of the Sapta-Mātṛkās or Śāktism. There are also other references in this inscription which may evoke interest of any student of Religious History of India. They are: '*parā-bhakti*' and awakening from '*nidrā*' (or śayana) of god Madhusūdana, a form of Viṣṇu (vs. 18 and 15 respectively). The *Utthānaikādaśī* and *Śayanaikādaśī* of Viṣṇu are still some of the important sectarian Vaiṣṇava festivals, observed in India, particularly in Bengal.

That king Skandagupta was a devout worshipper of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu, i.e. a '*parama-bhāgavata*', is proved by the inscriptions and coins issued by him. The emperor continued the tolerant policy of his fore-fathers. His officers also did not discourage the followers of other sects.

King Skandagupta was not a silent Vaiṣṇava, for he propagated for the cause of Vaiṣṇavism through some of his high officials, who embraced not only Vaiṣṇavism but caused the construction of temples also where images of lord Viṣṇu in his various forms were set up.

The *Bhiṭari pillar inscription*[56] of the time of Skand gupta records the installation of an image of Śārṅgin-Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu in his archer form). It may be mentioned in this connection that the Gupta kings issued a type of coins known to the numismatists as the 'archer type'. Was it due to some Vaiṣṇava influence ? In 1.17 the dedication of a village to god Śārṅga-Viṣṇu is recorded. Incarnations of Viṣṇu like Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Rāma-Dāśarathī as well as Pradyumna (one of the *Vyūha* forms of Vāsudeva) are mentioned. There is also a sly hint in verse 6 of this inscription to the Kṛṣṇa legend, as prevalent at that period (pun on words Kṛṣṇa and Devakī).

The *Junāgaḍh rock inscription*[57] of the said king contains an adoration of Viṣṇu, who was the perpetual abode of Lakṣmī. The Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu seems to have been described in one of the passages of this inscription. The Cakrabhṛt form of Viṣṇu, established by Cakrapālita, the son of his governor, has been described in connection with the *Śuśuniā inscription.*

The *Bihar stone pillar inscription*[58] of the same king refers to the dedication of a village in honour of goddess Bhadrā or Bhadrāryyā. This goddess may stand for Durgā-Ekānaṁśā or Subhadrā, sister of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. In some *purāṇas*, however, Durgā-Ekānaṁśā-Caṇḍikā-Subhadrā has been described as both sister and 'Vaiṣṇavī Śakti' of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. According to Dr. V. S. Agrawal, Bhadrā is the name of the wife of Kubera[59].

The next king of the Imperial Guptas was Budhagupta (*circa* 476 A.D.—496 A.D). One of the five *Dāmodarpur copper plates* has been issued during the reign of this king[60]. Another *copper plate*, also discovered at Dāmodarpur and important for our purpose, belonged to a Gupta monarch who ruled in the Gupta year 214 (i.e., 534 A.D)[61].

King Budhagupta assumed the title of '*parama-daivata*' among a host of others. Like his illustrious predecessors, this king also tried to place himself in equal footing with god (cf. theory of 'Divine origin' of king). The first *Dāmodarpur copper plate* in question, issued during the reign of this king shows that the worship of gods Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin, two interesting forms of Viṣṇu probably in his Varāha form, was once popular in North Bengal, bordering the 'terai' region, at the foot-hills of the Himālayas. It is related in the aforesaid *copper-plate* that a venerable city-merchant, named Ṛbhupāla, applied to the administrative officer in charge of the Koṭīvarṣa-*viṣaya* for the purpose of purchasing some uncultivable fallow lands as well as homestead lands with a view to building two temples, one each for the two aforesaid deities along with storerooms,

The second copper-plate grant records the application of Amṛtadeva, a *Kulaputraka*, from Ayodhyā, for the donation of similar fallow as well as homestead lands for repair-works and maintenance of the damaged temple of Śvetavarāhasvāmin situated in the forest region (*araṇya*, i.e. 'terai' region ?) made to the administrative officer in charge of the *Koṭīvarṣa-viṣaya*.

As regards the identification as well as the exact location of gods Kokāmukhasvāmin and Svetavarāhasvāmin and their respective temples, scholars are not of uniform opinion. For example, we may refer to the view of Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, who challenged the identification of Kokāmukhasvāmin with Śiva as was previously done by Dr. D. C. Sircar and suggested that Kokāmukhasvāmin and Śvetavarāhasvāmin were but two different forms of the Varāha *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. thus equating Kokāmukha with Kokā-varāha.[62] Dr. Kamala Ray thinks that Kokāmukhasvāmin was a form of Viṣṇu's Nṛsiṁha incarnation.[63] In the opinion of the present writer, this god possibly represented the Hayagrīva form, which was an *abhicārika* aspect of the great god Viṣṇu. The worship of this form might have been popular in the northern border of Bengal, described in the inscriptions as *araṇya*, most likely denoting the 'terai' region. Some scholars take *araṇya* in the sense of a particular section of the *Koṭīvarṣa-viṣaya*, not far away from the present village of Dāmodarpur where the copper-plates were found. According to Dr. Sircar the original (*ādya*) temples of these two gods might have been situated in region of Nepāl known as 'Barāhachatra' (Varāha-kṣetra) or Kokāmukha-tīrtha on the river Kokā, a tributary of the Sun-Kośi. The temples of deities named in the inscriptions were, according to him, but two replicas built at Doṅgāgrāma by Ṛbhupāla, where two 'imitation gods' of the original temples (in *himavacchikhara*) were enshrined. Dr. Raychaudhuri, however, was inclined to locate the temples in a place very near Kāmarūpa on the authority of some passages in the *Brahmapurāṇa* (*chs. 219 and*

229).[65] But, Dr. Sircar did not accept the authority of this late *purāṇa*.[66] The *Vāmanapurāṇa* also gives an account of Kokāmukha-tīrtha. In any case there is hardly any doubt that the *Dāmodarpur copper plate inscriptions* testify to the existence of the worship of Viṣṇu in his incarnatory forms in this part of Bengal during the Gupta times.

The next important epigraphic record comes from the village of Guṇaighar in the district of Tipperah.[67] In this record, issued in the *Gupta year* 188 (i.e., 508 A.D.) during the reign of king Vaiṇyagupta, a temple of Pradyumneśvara has been mentioned, rather incidentally, in connection with the demarcation of the boundary of the land grant. Most scholars have taken Pradyumneśvara as a combined form of Hari and Hara (Pradyumna and Īśvara (cf. *Deopārā Praśasti* of king Vijayasena). In the opinion of Dr. P. C. Bagchi, though Pradyumneśvara represented Viṣṇu, it also stood for a different composite icon of Harihara.[68]

It will not be out of place here to mention that there is a small mound called as 'Cūḍār Pāḍ,' probably concealing a Gupta temple, at Guṇaighar (ancient Guṇekā-grahāra, district Tipperah), wherefrom at least two finely carved stone images of Viṣṇu, probably belonging to the late Gupta or early Pāla period, have been discovered. They are still being worshipped there. It is to be considered whether 'Cūḍār Pāḍ' is identical with 'Cūḍāmaṇi-nagar,' mentioned in *line 28* of the *Guṇaighar copper-plate inscription* of Vainyagupta.[69]

Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Gupta period

After the disintegration of the Gupta empire, the *Bhāgavata* or Vaiṣṇava religion flourished in the dominions of many of their former feudatories, specially in central India. The *Barābar hill cave inscription*[70] of Anantavarman, the *Khoh copper-plate inscriptions* of Jayanātha (G.E. 177), Śarvanātha (G.E. 193 and 214) and Saṁkṣobha (G.E. 209) prove this. The first record refers to the installation of an image of Kṛṣṇa; the *Khoh records* of Śarvanātha and Saṁkṣobha

mention the goddess Piṣṭapurikā (a form of Lakṣmī or Annapūrṇā) and that of Jayanātha refers to a temple of Viṣṇu. The *Khoh record* of Saṁkṣobha also begins with an invocation to god Vāsudeva. Among other epigraphic records, mention may be made of the *Sārnāth stone inscription* of Prakaṭāditya (belonging to the 6th century A.D.) and the *Ālinā c.p. ins.* of Śīlāditya VII (Gupta-Valabhi year 447=766 A.D.) describing the Narasiṁha incarnation of Viṣṇu and Muradviṭ-Viṣṇu.[71] The *Maliyā copper plate inscription* refers to Dhruvasena I as a *Bhāgavata* or Vaiṣṇava.[72]

With the fall of the Guptas, *Bhāgavatism* might have lost to some extent its pre-eminence in northern India. Some of the powerful sovereigns of the post-Gupta period were adherents of non-Vaiṣṇava creeds. Though, the Bhāgavata form of Vaiṣṇavism was on the wane in North India, in Deccan and South India it was in a flourishing condition. The Cālukyas in the Deccan assumed the title of *parama-bhāgavata*. In South India Vaiṣṇavism had a sweet home inasmuch as some Vaiṣṇavite records were issued there during the reigns of the Pallava and Naḷa kings. That the worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was popular in the Tamil country, even in the early centuries of the Christian era, is proved by the *Śilappadikāram* and other works. Later on, the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* was composed somewhere in South India (Draviḍa country watered by rivers like Tāmraparṇī) thronged by the worshippers of Nārāyaṇa, who (the pure souls) were devoted to the Blessed Vāsudeva.

Vaiṣṇavism also made a considerable headway among the members of the Traikūṭaka dynasty in Western India, for some of the coins issued by the rulers of this dynasty unmistakably attributed the title of *parama-vaiṣṇava* to them.

Bengal was a stronghold of Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Gupta times. The royal personages and common people professed Vaiṣṇavism and made various gifts in honour of the cult-deity. Many people had Vaiṣṇavite names also.

The *Mallasārul copper-plate inscription* of the time of

king Gopacandra shows that Vaiṣṇavism penetrated into the masses of Bengal.[73] The *seal* of king Vijayasena, affixed to the *Mallasārul copper plate*, bears in relief the standing figure of a two-armed male-deity with an oval-shaped *cakra* in the background. This *cakra* has been identified by late N.G. Majumdar with the Buddhist *Dharmacakra*.[74] But, it may as well stand for the *Sudarśana cakra* of Viṣṇu.

In the opinion of late N.G. Majumdar the invocatory verses refer to the Buddhist *trinity*—Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha ('Santaḥ' has been emended as 'Saṅghaḥ'). He is further inclined to take Lokanātha (i.e.), mentioned in the inscription, as the Buddha. Dr. Sukumar Sen, however, has tried to prove that the invocatory verses really refer to Viṣṇu.[75] For, according to him, Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha can also be taken as a syncretic form of Viṣṇu. After a comparison of the aforesaid verses[76] with *line 1-2, part II* of the *Besnagar inscription* of Heliodoros, he has come to the conclusion that Avalokiteśvara of the *Mahāyānists* was transformed into a notable form of Viṣṇu in Bengal under the name of Lokanātha in the early 6th century A. D. It has been further stressed by Dr. Sen that the adoration of Lokanātha produced in Bengal an idea which was somewhat similar to that of *Bhakti*. Lokanātha as one of the *vibhavas* of Viṣṇu has been referred to in the *Sātvata Saṁhitā* and the *Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*. It may not be out of place here to refer to a tendency prevailing in the mediaeval times to incorporate the Buddhist deities into the Brāhmanical pantheon, but it should be borne in mind that Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha of the *Mahāyānists* has imbibed many traits of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva, for the idea of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva is much older than that of the former. So, it may be concluded that the deity represented on the *seal* may be identified as a syncretistic form of Lokanātha-Viṣṇu.

The *Tipperah copper-plate inscription* of Lokanātha, belonging to the 7th century A.D, refers to the worship of *Bhagavān* Ananta-Nārāyaṇa, (a form of Viṣṇu-Anantaśāyin

or Śeṣaśāyin) even in the eastern extremity of Bengal.[77] This god is said to have been adored by even some chief gods, the Asuras, the sun, the moon, Kubera, the Kinnaras, the Vidyādharas, the chief serpents, the Gandharvas, Varuṇa, the Yakṣas and others.

The inscriptional evidences of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods show that god Ananta-Nārāyaṇa or Nārāyaṇa reclining on Anantanāga was popular in different parts of India.

The *seal*, attached to the *Tipperah grant*, bears in relief a figure of the goddess Lakṣmī or Śrī, standing on a lotus-pedestal being sprinkled by two elephants from two sides with water. This is the 'Gaja-Lakṣmī' motif, so characteristic of the indigenous Indian coins. The place, where the figure of Ananta-Nārāyaṇa was erected, was situated in the *Suvvuṅga-viṣaya*. The grantee of the record, *Mahāsāmanta* Pradoṣaśarman, expressed his pious wish that the place would one day surely turn to a Tīrtha. This plate probably belongs to 7th cent. A.D.—the age of anarchy (*mātsyanyāya*) in Bengal.

The next Vaiṣṇavite record comes from Kailān.[78] It was issued by the *parama-vaiṣṇava* king Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta. In this record the king has been shown as a devout worshipper of the god Puruṣottama (Jagannātha ?), a form of Viṣṇu. Other qualities appertaining to this Vaiṣṇava king consisted of '*karuṇā*', '*anabhimata-prāṇa-nigrahe*' and '*anekaprāṇi-koṭi-sahasra-jīvitasya-pradāyaka*' (*ll. 11 & 13*). He was indeed a *parama-kāruṇika*. In this connection *line 10* of the *Junāgaḍh inscription*,[79] dated in *Śaka 72* (i.e. 150 A.D. & issued by Rudradāman I) **takāruṇyena* etc.), and line 5 of the *Nāsik inscription*[80] of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Puḷumāyi of regnal year 19 (i.e., 149 A.D.) (*a-pānahisārucisa*) may be taken into consideration. King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta was very liberal in administering his religious policy. Himself a *parama-vaiṣṇava*, he did not interfere with the religion of others ; and appointed one Jayanāga, a Buddhist, to a high ministerial post. He went

so far as to grant some *pāṭakas* of land to the aforesaid minister, so that he could erect a Buddhist *vihāra* in the capital city. Another Jayanāga of the *Malliā grant*[81] (latter half of the 6th century A.D.) was a *parama-bhāgavata* 'Mahārājādhirāja', having his capital at Karṇasuvarṇa. It is interesting to note here that a gold coin, bearing the *cakra* and the legend 'Jaya', has been taken by Dr. Nalinikanta Bhattasali as standing for '*Jaya-nāga*' (after substituting 'nāga' in place of 'gupta', originally suggested by Allan).[82] It is likely that this Jaya (-nāga) was a Vaiṣṇava, for the *cakra* on the coin is definitely Vaiṣṇavite in character. So, king Jaya (nāga) of the coin may be identified with the *parama-bhāgavata* king Jayanāga.

Mention may now be made of terra-cotta *seals* which bear figures of Hindu divinities in relief, viz. Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Sūrya, Kārttikeya, Pārvatī and Gaṅgā-Yamunā along with their respective emblems. Some ancient sites like Ahicchatrā, Bhīṭā, Rājghaṭ, Basārh, Kumrāhār, Rājgīr, Pāhāḍpur, Rājāsan and Sābhār (the last three places are situated in Bengal) have yielded such terracotta *seals*.[83] The finished *seals* were usually made of clay ; but some were sun-burnt, while others were lightly burnt. Some of these *seals* represented Viṣṇu in relief. Some again, had the name of the god, accompanied by some of his auspicious symbols. From a study of these *seals*, it is clear that even when the Brāhmanical cult-gods were being iconically represented, they were comparatively infrequently done in the terra-cotta *seals*, where copious use of the varieties of their respective emblems was made.

Some of these terra-cotta *seals* bore the Vaiṣṇavite 'creed formula' with 'twelve-syllables', viz. '*Oṁ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*'. This 'formula' has generally been found on the terra-cotta *seals* or plaques of the 6th-8th century A.D. It seems that the use of this 'creed formula' has had a long history, and that it was certainly evolved at an early period. Its use in early records has so far been found in three places, viz. Khoh (M. P.), Bhīṭā (U. P.) and Rājāsan (mod. East

Pakistan). It is very difficult to ascertain the exact place of the origin of the 'creed formula'. The earliest reference to some such 'formula' may be found in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, viz. '*Nārāyaṇāya vidmahe Vāsudevāya dhīmahi tanno Viṣṇo pracodayāt*/'. The Vaiṣṇavite expression like '*Jitaṁ Bhagavatā*' etc., mentioned in the *Poonā plates* of *atyantya-bhagavad-bhaktā* Prabhāvatī-guptā, may also be found in some other epigraphic records of the Vākāṭakas and the early Kadambas.[84]

As regards the terra-cotta *seals* or plaques bearing the Vaiṣṇavite 'creed formula', found from different parts of Bengal, references may be made to a (terra-cotta) plaque with a standing figure of a four-armed Viṣṇu found at Rājāsan near Sābhār, district Dacca (now in East Pakistan) bearing the 'twelve-syllabled' *mantra*, inscribed in the characters of the 7th-8th century A.D. as well as a (terra-cotta) *seal* from Sābhār bearing the figure of Viṣṇu in relief with an inscription written in characters of the 6th-7th century A.D.

With the help of the glyptic data, it can be said with some amount of certainty that Vaiṣṇavism had a stronghold in Bengal in the post-Gupta times.

Representations of Viṣṇu and his various forms, mostly incarnatory, found in eastern India in the medieval period also testify as to the wide prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism during this period. The popularity of the Kṛṣṇa legend from the earlier times is vouchsafed by the *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* reliefs from Māṇḍor (Rājasthān), Deogarh (Central India), Bādāmī (Mysore) and Mahābalīpuram (Madras). They can collectively be dated in the Gupta and early post-Gupta periods. The *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* sculptures on the basement of the Pāhāḍpur temple also testify to the popularity of the 'cult of Kṛṣṇa' in Bengal. This practice continued in Bengal as late as the 16th century A. D. or afterwards, but the medium was replaced, in most cases, by terra-cotta. It is interesting to note that Caitanyadeva witnessed some such representations in the village of Kānāi-Nāṭśāl during his tour in Bengal.

The Pāhāḍpur panels depicting *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* scenes, have been classified by experts into three distinct groups, viz. amatory couple, true *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* scenes and narrative reliefs. To the first category belongs an amatory couple, identified as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by K.N. Dikshit[85] (according to Prof. S.K. Saraswati,[86] however, Rukmiṇī or Satyabhāmā and Kṛṣṇa). An image of Balarāma in greyish sandstone, also, belongs to this category. To the second category falls the following *Kṛṣṇaite* scenes, viz. (a) Kṛṣṇa killing the horse-demon Keśin, sent by Kaṁsa for killing him; (b) Kṛṣṇa lifting the Govardhana hillock; (c) Kṛṣṇa uprooting the twin (*Yamala*)-Ārjuna trees, who were no other than the accursed Gandharvas; (d) killing of Kaṁsa by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, (e) killing of Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, wrestlers to Kaṁsa, by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma; and (f) a figure (Kṛṣṇa?) playing with the flute. To the third category belong some narrative scenes, such as, (a) Vasudeva carrying infant Kṛṣṇa, (b) Devakī handing over the new-born baby (Kṛṣṇa) to Vasudeva, (c) Kṛṣṇa stealing away lumps of butter or cheese, (d) Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma sporting with the *gopa-bālakas*, and (e) Balarāma killing Pralambāsura. The Pāhāḍpur panels depicting *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* scenes, possibly show that the artists of Bengal received an impulse from the Kṛṣṇa saga related in the great epic and several *purāṇas* which were popular in Bengal. The popularity of the stories relating to Kṛṣṇa is also testified by a study of the epigraphic records found in Bengal.

Before we conclude, it will be worthwhile to say something about the relation between the *vyūhavāda* and *avatāravāda*, i.e. the relation between the emanatory and incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu. From a study of the archaeological as well as literary records of the Gupta and the early post-Gupta periods, it seems that the 'doctrine of the *vyūhas*' was not conspicuous by its absence, though that of the *avatāras* gained much popularity. The earliest extant images of some of the *vyūhas* date back from the late Gupta period onwards. In

this connection we may refer to the Osia images of *circa* 9th century A.D. Dr. Banerjea[87] has shown that the same name or form may denote either of the two aforesaid aspects of Viṣṇu; that a typical form of the cult-god which denotes Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma may be both a primary *vyūha* and a *vibhava*; and that the iconic representations of *vyūha*-Saṁkarṣaṇa and *vibhava*-Saṁkarṣaṇa are different.

It may not be out of place here to refer to the views of scholars regarding the absence of *Pāñcarātric* terms in the Gupta records. There are mainly three scholars whose views are to be discussed here. They are: Drs. H. C. Raychaudhuri, P. C. Bagchi and D. C. Sircar. In the opinion of Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri there was a 'a total absence of any reference' to the *Vyūhas*—Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha in the epigraphic records of the Gupta period. Moreover, he has shown that 'the disappearance of the independent worship of *Vyūhas* excepting Vāsudeva was perhaps one of the first fruits of the growing popularity of the *Avatāras*' and that 'the ousting of the *Vyūhas* by the *Avatāras* was one of the characteristic signs of the transformation of Bhāgavatism into Vishṇuism'.[88] Dr. Raychaudhuri has finally shown that the *Bhāgavatas* and the *Pañcarātras* were not rival sects; and that the *Brahmapurāṇa* did not forget to mention the four *vyūhas*. The views of Dr. Raychaudhuri have been challenged by Dr. Bagchi[89] on the grounds that *Bhāgavatism* was different from the *Pañcarātrism* in the Gupta period; that no trace of the *vyūhas* would be found in the epigraphic records from Bengal; and that the *vyūhavāda* did not die out or merge with the worship of the *avatāras*. Dr. Sircar has differed from both the scholars on some points.[90] He has shown that the *vyūha-vādins* were much influenced by the *avatāra-vādins*; that the independent worship of the *vyūhas* was not popular in that period; and that the separate mention of the *Bhāgavatas* as well as of the *Pāñcarātrikas* in some texts was not due to any doctrinal differences between the two. The *Umācal inscription* of Surendravarman

(cir. 6th cent. or earlier) shows that though the independent worship of Balarāma was no longer popular, it did not die out.[91]

It is, however, clear that in spite of some minute doctrinal differences between *Pāñcarātrism* and *Bhāgavatism*, the two were component parts of the common cult, designated as Vaiṣṇavism. The number of *caturvyūhas* was later on increased to twenty-four in the Gupta period and afterwards. Iconic representations of both the composite form of *Viṣṇu-caturmūrti* and the *caturviṁśatimūrtis* of Viṣṇu were made in India, including Kashmir, in the post-Gupta and medieval periods.

Gupta India witnessed a feverish activity of the *purāṇa*-compilers. Many *Pañcarātra* texts like *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, *Sātvata Saṁhitā*, *Parama Saṁhitā* etc. were either composed or compiled during this period. From a study of these works, it appears that *Pāñcarātrism* was popular in the Gupta age.

In some works of the post-Gupta times also the followers of *Pāñcarātrism* as well as *Bhāgavatism* are mentioned. For example, we may refer to the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa Bhaṭṭa, where the aforesaid two religious systems are mentioned. Śaṁkarārya, the commentator of the *Harṣacarita*, has explained away the terms '*Pāñcarātrika*' and '*Bhāgavata*', as '*Vaiṣṇava-bheda*' and '*Viṣṇu-bhakta*' ('a follower of Kṛṣṇa', according to Cowell) respectively. So, it is clear that there was no cleavage between the upholders of the *vyūha-vāda* and those of the *avatāra-vāda*.

The following post-Gupta *Pañcarātra* works, viz. the *Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā* (c. 8th cent. A.D.), *Viṣvakṣena Saṁhitā* (c. 8th cent. A.D), *Pādma Tantra* (earlier than 9th cent. A.D.), *Nāradīya Pañcarātra* (c. 9th cent. A.D.) and the *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra* (c. 9th cent. A.D.) refer both to the *vyūhas* and the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu.[92] In some other works, e.g., the *Brahmapurāṇa* (chs. 190-192) and *Pañcarātra-vidhāna*, the stress has been given upon the worship of the *vyūhas*.

The majority of the *Pañcarātra* texts were composed in north India, specially in Kashmir. But, Bengal and other parts of eastern India were not lagging behind, for some important texts on *Pāñcarātrism* like *Jayākhya Saṁhitā*, *Pādma Tantra*, *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra* and *Nāradīya Pañcarātra* were said to have been composed in the eastern region.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

1 Cf. *Aṣṭādaśa purāṇānām śravaṇād yat phalam bhavet*
Tat phalam samavāpnoti Vaiṣṇavonātra saṁśayaḥ /
—*Mbh.*, XXVIII. 6.97.

Also consult, verse no. 98 of the same.

2 For this expression used in the coins of the Traikūṭaka dynasty, please see, Rapson's *Catalogue of Coins of the Andhra Dynasty etc.*, B. M., pp. 198, 202.

3 Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Early History of the Vaishṇava Sect.* (*E.H.V.S.*), 1936, p. 14. Following verses of the *R. V.* may be consulted for this purpose: I. 22.19; IV. 18.11; VIII. 89.12.

4 Cf. *R. V.*, I. 22.17-18, 154.4, 154.6; VIII. 12.27.

5 Cf. *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, IV. 3.95 ff.

6 Svapneśvara defines '*Bhakti*' after verse I. 1.1. of his *Śāṇḍilya Sūtram*. Also see, *Bhagavad-gītā*, X.9-10 and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I. 20.19.

7 Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

8 For this, the views of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Grierson, Mrinal Dasgupta as also of Drs. H. C. Raychaudhuri, P. C. Bagchi, J. N. Banerjea, D. C. Sircar and A. D. Pusalkar may be taken into account

9 Hopkins, *Religions of India.* p. 388; Dr. R. C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, vol. I, 1958, p. 111 ff.

10 R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other Minor Religious systems*, Strassburg, 1913, p. 35 ff. Also see, Dr. S. Chatterji's *Theistic Sects in Ancient India*, 1962 (Vaiṣṇavas).

11 J. N. Banerjea has identified the *pañcavīras* of the *Morā stone inscription* with the 'five heroes' of the Vṛṣṇis or Sātvatas on the authority of a passage from the *Vāyupurāṇa*. For his view, see *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, vol. 10, pp. 65-68. *J.I.S.O.A.*). There is enough evidence to show that Balarāma-Saṅkarṣaṇa was independently worshipped even before the Christian era.

12 Cf. Mc. Crindle's *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 201 ; Chapter IV of Book VIII of Quintus Curtius Rufus' *History of Alexander the Great* (Eng. Tr.). It was R. G. Bhandarkar who first identified Herakles or Hercules with Vāsudeva and the Sourasenoi with the Sātvatas.

13 For *Khāmbābā* or *Besnagar pillar inscription*, see, *Arch. Survey of India, Annual Report* (*A.S.I., A. R.*), 1908-09, p. 126.

14 Cf. *A.S.I.A.R.*, 1913-14, pp. 188-91; 1914-15, p. 21.

15 Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar, *E. I.*, vol. 22, p. 204.

16 The temples, which housed them, were not always elaborate structures: From a study of inscriptions and coins, it appears that sometimes cult-objects were placed on pedestals inside such structures with some fencing works.

17 For *Pabhosā cave inscription*, no. 2 of the time of Udāka (reg. yr. 10), see *Epigraphia Indica* (*E. I.*) vol. 2, p. 242 ff.

18 For *Nānāghāṭ cave inscription* of queen Nāganikā, see, *Arch. Surv. of West India* vol. 5, p. 60 ff.

19 For *Morā well inscription* of the time of (Svāmī) Śoḍāsa, see *E. I.*, vol. 24, p. 194. ff.

20 Ed. R. P. Chanda, *Mem. A.S.I., no. 5*, pp. 168-173 ; also see, Lüder's *List*, inscription no. 82. The inscription records the gift of a *toraṇa, vedikā* and *devakulam* or *śailam* or *catuḥśālam*.

21 R. P. Chanda, *op. cit.*

22 The discovery of this image in (West) Bengal is important for our purpose as it shows that a certain portion of the populace of the state was perhaps inclined to *Bhāgavatism* - Vaiṣṇavism. For the *Burkikhar Brāhmī Ins.*, see, *Jour. Mythic Soc.*, 1956, p. 221 ff.

23 Cunningham, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1893, pp. 126-27; Ghirsman, *Les Chionites Hephtalites*, pp. 55-58.

24 Dr. P. C. Bagchi in the *Dacca History of Bengal* (*D.H,B.*), vol. 1, 1943, p. 404.

25 Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 177; also see, Sister Nivedita's *Foot-falls of Indian History*, p. 206 ff. and Dr. S. B. Dasgupta's *Śrī Rādhār Kramavikāśa* etc., (in Bengali).

26 Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-66, 172. Reference may be made here to the 'Yogāsana' form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.

27 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 270.

28 *Ibid.* Note that the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu is proved by this inscription also.

29 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 126 ff.

30 The term 'Bhagavat', which appears in many inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, possibly stands for Viṣṇu.

31 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 74 ff ; D. C. Sircar, *Classical Age* (Hist. of the Indian People, Bombay, vol. 3), p. 426.

32 The Garuḍa emblem on the coins of Samudragupta as well as the 'Garuḍa seal', mentioned in the *Allahabad Praśasti*, is interesting. The Garuḍa emblem which appears on the Gupta records and coins was also adopted by the Paramāras in 6th cent. A. D.

33 Sircar, *Cultural Heritage*, vol. IV. Calcutta, pp. 131-132.

34 The work, *Kṛṣṇacaritam*, said to have been composed by Samudragupta, is a forged text. *The Nālandā* and *Gayā c.ps.* are 'spurious' in character.

35 It is interesting to note that the expressions like 'Acintya Puruṣa' mentioned in the *Allahabad Praśasti* sound like an echo of those in the *Nāsik cave inscription* of king Vāsiṣṭhīputra *Puḷumāyi*, viz. *Aparimitain - akhayamacitam - abhuta* (l. 8). For the views of the present writer. see *Proc.*, *I.H.C.*, 1957, pp. 91-93 and *Annals of Bhandarkar Or. Res. Inst.*, vol. 42, 1961, pp. 163-61; also see, Sircar, *Cult. Herit.*, vol. 4, pp. 131-32.

35a Sircar, *ibid.*

36 Vögel, *The Earliest Sanskrit Inscriptions of Java,* 1925, pp. 16-21 Kern, *Verspreide Geschriften,* VII, p. 5.

37 N. N. Vasu, *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā* (*V. S. P. P.*), vol. 3, p. 268 ff.; H. P. Shastri, *E. I.*, vol. 12; p. 317 ff; vol. 13, p. 133; K. N. Dikshit. *A.S.I., A. R.*, 1927-28, p. 188 ff.

38 N. N. Vasu, *ibid.*

39 *C.I.I.* vol. 3, p. 270 ff.

40 Dr. A. S. Altekar, *Catalogue of Gupta Coins in the Bāyanā* Hoard, 1954. p. 112 ff. & pl. X.

41 Cf. v. 45 of the *Junāgaḍh inscription* of Skandagupta, *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 58 ff.

42 Ed. R. C. Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Kamboja.* As. Soc., p. 2 ff.

43 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3. p. 25 (No. 1).

44 K. N. Dikshit, *op. cit.*,

45 Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-75.

46 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 141.

47 In some epigraphic records of the 5th century A. D., i.e. of the Vākāṭakas and Kadambas, this formula is found in the very beginning (*Penukoṇḍā Pls.*, *E. I.*, 14, p. 334; *Hebbaṭa grt.*, *Mysore A. S., A. R.*, 1925, p. 98; *Pallava grt.*, *E. I.*, 3. p. 145).

48 Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (*P.H.A.I.*), 5th edn., p. 582 (for the meaning of the word *parama-daivata*).

49 *E. I.*, vol. 21, p. 81 ff.

50 S. K. Saraswati, *J.I.S.O.A.*, vol. 8, p. 151 ff.

51 For *Karamdāṇḍā stone inscription*, see *E. I.*, vol. 10, p. 71 ff; *Dhanāidaha c. p. inscription*, *E. I.*, vol. 17, p. 347 ff.; *Mallasārul c. p. inscription*, *E. I.*, vol. 23. p. 159 ff; *Faridpur c. ps.* of Dharmāditya and Gopacandra, *I. A.* vol. 39, p. 195 ff and p. 204.

52 For ins. of Budhagupta, *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 89; ins. of Toramāṇa, *ibid.*, p. 159 ff.

53 H. P. Shastri, *E.I.*, vol. 12, p. 320 ff.

54 Here, word Vāsudeva is not used as 'a son of Vasudeva' (*Mbh.*, III. 14.8), but in an altogether different sense, i.e., 'an abode or a resting-place (of the world or of all creatures) (*Mbh.*, XII. 341.41).

55 It is to be considered whether the term, 'Bhagavata' in v. 20 qualified "Viṣṇo' (in gen.) or not. If not, then the term in question may possibly be emended as 'Bhāgavata' and be taken as qualifying or referring' to 'Śrīmān Mayūrākṣakaḥ'. It is to be noted that the inscription in question begins with an adoration to Viṣṇu.

56 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 53 ff.

57 *Ibid*, p. 58 ff.

58 *Ibid*, p. 49 ff.

59 *Jour. Numismatic Society of India*, vol. III, p. 82.

60 For the *Dāmodarpur c. p.* of the time of Budhagupta (G.E. 163), see *Ep. Ind.*, vol. 15, p. 135 ff.

61 For this *c. p. ins.*, see *ibid*, p. 142 ff as also vol. 17, p. 193 ff. In the opinion of the present writer the name of the missing king may be restored as Kumāragupta III. mentioned in the *Bhitari seal* and a fragmentary *seal* from Nālandā.

Most scholars have read the date as Gupta year 224, i.e., equivalent to 544 A. D. But, after a careful examination of the facsimile of the *c. p. ins.* in question it may be found that the date as read by Drs. R. G. Basak and N. K. Bhattasali, i.e., 214, is the correct one. Dr. Basak, however, changed his view afterwards (R. G. Basak, *Ep. Ind.*, vol 15, p. 142 ff. and *History of N. E. India*, 1934, p. 98 ff; N. K. Bhattasali, *Ep. Ind.*, vol. 18, p. 84.

62 H. C. Raychaudhuri, *B. C. Law Volume*, Part I, 1946, p. 88 ff. and *Studies in Indian Antiquities*, 2nd edn., 1956, Calcutta, pp. 207-08 ; D. C. Sircar, *Ind. Cult.*, vol. 5, p. 432 ff., *I.H.Q.*, vol. 21, p. 56 ff.

63 *I.H.Q.*, vol. 17, p. 370 ff.

64 *Ibid*, vol. 22, p. 312.

65 For H. C. Raychaudhuri's views, see f.n. no. 62 supra.

66 *I.H.Q.*. vol. 22, p. 32; *Classical Age* (Bhāratīya Vidyābhavan), pp. 418-19.

67 D. C. Bhattacharya, *I.H.Q.*, vol. 6, p. 53 ff ; M. Ghosh, *ibid*, p. 561.

68 Dr. P. C. Bagchi in the *Dacca History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, 1943, p. 400.

69 *I.H.Q.*, vol. 6, p. 53 ff.

70 For *Barābar Hill-cave inscription*, see *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (*C.I.I.*) vol. 3, p. 223; *Khoh c. p.* of Jayanātha, *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 120; *Khoh c. ps.* of Sarvanātha, *ibid*, p. 126 ff; *Khoh c. p.* of Saṁkṣobha, *ibid*, p. 114 ff.

71 For *Ālinā c. p.*, see *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 171 f. ; *Sārnāth inscription*, *ibid*, p. 285.

72 *C.I.I.*, vol. 3, p. 164 ff.

73 Ed. by N. G. Majumdar, *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā*, (*V.S.P.P.*), vol. 44, p. 17 ff and *E. I.*, vol. 23, p. 157 ff ; D. C. Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, vol. 1, p. 359 ff. and *E. I.*, vol. 31, p. 67 ff. According to Dr. R. C. Majumdar, this inscription was dated in 528 A. D., for his view see, *D.H.B.*, vol. I, p. 54. Also see present writer's article on this ins. in *J.A.S.*, (L) vol. 24, 1958, pp. 31-38.

74 N. G. Majumdar, *ibid*. According to Ajit Ghose (*J.I. S.O.A.*, vol. 13, p. 49 ff), this was not a *cakra*, but 'the rays coming out from the body of Avalokiteśvara.' Also see, *J.N.S.I.*, vol. 16, p. 97 ff. and *E.I.*, vol. 31, p. 67 ff.

75 *Prācīn Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*. (in Bengali). *Viśvavidyāsaṁgraha* Series. pp. 32-33. For the later views of the same scholar, see, *Dharma Thākurer Itihāsa* (Bengal off-print, pp. 14-15. Incidentally it may be pointed out that 'Lokaikanātha' appears as an appellation of Puruṣottama (Viṣṇu) in the *Gayā ins.* of Nārāyaṇapāla, yr. 7.

76 Verses referred to above may well be compared with those from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (III.17). the *Mahābhārata* (XI. 23.5 & XII. 43.22) and the *Gītā* (III.7, XVI. 1-2, XVIII. 3 and 5).

77 *I.H.Q.*, vol. 6, p. 88; *E. I.*, vol. 15, p. 301.

78 *I.H.Q.*, vol. 22, p. 269 ff., vol. 23, p. 221 ff.; *V.S.P.P.*, 1353 B. S., p. 369 ff. It may be incidentally mentioned here that a Rāṭā family (Vedic scholiasts is referred in the *Monghyr Grt.* of Devapāla. One king Īśvara Pāla is known from Kalluawar (*Kalāchhalā Grt.*).

79 *J.B.B.R.A.S.*, vol. 7. p. 113 ff; *Arch. Surv.*, *W. Ind.*, vol. 2, p. 128 ff; *I. A.*, vol. 7, p. 287 ff. *E. I.*, vol. 7, p. 42 ff.

80 *Arch. Surv.*, *W. Ind.*, vol. 4, p. 180 ff.; *E. I.*, vol. 8, p. 60 ff. Curiously enough, there are some ideas or expressions analogous with the 'Ahiṁsā' doctrine in some works on Jainism and Buddhism which sound like an echo of *Bhāgavatism*-Vaiṣṇavism.

81 *E. I.*, vol. 9, p. 43 ff.

82 Bhattashali, *J.R.A.S.B.*, (N. S.), vols 21 and 23, pp. 43 and 67 respectively; Allan—*Catalogue of Coins of the Gupta Dynasty* etc., pp. cxvii, 43.

83 For, *Ahicchatrā seals*, see *Ancient India* (Arch. Bulletin of the A.S.I.), no. 4, p. 104 ff.; *Rājghāt seals*, *Jour. U.P. Hist. Soc.*, *vol.* 14, p. 1 ff.; *Basārh seals*, *A.S.I.*, *A.R.*, 1903-04, p. 104 ff. and *Development of Hindu Iconography*, 2nd edn., pp. 191-92, (*D.H.I.*) *Bhīṭa seals*, *A.S.I. A. R.*, 1911-12. p. 50 ff., *A.S.I.*, *A. R.*, 1913-14, p. 118; *Kumrāhār and Rājgīr*, see respective 'Reports' published by the K. P. Jaysawal Res. Inst. and A.S.I.; *Rājāsan-Sābhār*, *A.S.I.*, *A. R.*, 1927-28, pp. 111-12 and Dr. N. K. Bhattasali's *Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Images in the Dacca Museum*, 1929, Introduction; & *Pāhārpur*, *Mem. of A.S.I.*, no. 55, Texts and Plates.

84 For, the *Poonā plates*, see *E. I.*, vol. 15. p. 41 ff.

85 *M.A.S.I.*, no. 55, pp. 19, 51-67.

86 *Early Sculpture of Bengal* (*J.D.L.*, vol. 10). p. 34 ff.

87 *D.H.I.*, p. 393.

88 *E.H.V.S.*, pp. 175-76, 179 and *Studies in Indian Antiquities* (*S.I.A.*), 2nd edn. p. 208.

89 P. C. Bagchi, *D.H.B.*, vol. 1, p. 402 ff.

90 Sircar, *Classical Age*, pp. 416-19, and see his review of the *D.H.B.*, vol. 1 in the pages of *J.R.A.S.B.* , L., 1943.

91 *E. I.*, vol. 31, p. 67 ff.

92 For the ages of the following works, viz *Jayākhya*, *Jauṣkara* and *Sātvata Saṁhitās*, see respectively, *G.O.S.*, vol. 54, 1931 (ed. E. Krishnamacharya and foreword by Dr. B. T. Bhattacharya), p. 29 ff.; *G.O.S.*, vol. 86. 1940 (ed. S. K. Aiyenger), Intro.; *G.O.S.*, vol. 130 (ed. Dr. P. Shah), p. xxiii ff.; also see, Dr. R. C. Hazra's *Purāṇic Records* etc., 1940, p. 218 and *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, vol. 1, 1958, p. 216 ff.

CHAPTER II

VAIṢṆAVISM IN THE PĀLA PERIOD

In the previous chapter it has been shown that Vaiṣṇavism reached a high watermark in the history of religions not only in Bengal, but in other parts of India also. During the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, Vaiṣṇavism not only enjoyed the royal patronage but penetrated into the masses, for common people affiliated to this cult, made gifts to cult-god Viṣṇu and his various forms. One of the notable features appertaining to the religious history of the Gupta and the post-Gupta times is the spirit of toleration or catholicism in place of narrow sectarianism.

The same catholicity of religious views was shown in the Pāla times also. The Pāla monarchs like their imperial Gupta predecessors inculcated this admirable features in their religious policy. Though staunch Buddhists, they did not hesitate to employ orthodox Brāhmins like Garga, Darbhapāṇi, Someśvara, Kedāra Miśra and Gurava Miśra as their hereditary ministers[1]. Kings of two other minor ruling dynasties of Bengal, viz. the Candras and Kāmbojas were more or less tolerant. But, while the rulers of the former dynasty were Buddhist, those of the latter were Śaiva.

The history of Bengal before the advent of the Pālas is shrouded in mystery. The country was passing through chaos and disorder during the period, and was a victim of several invasious from outside. The *Khalimpur copper plate inscription*[2], issued during the reign of king Dharmapāla, refers to this chaotic condition as 'mātsanyāya'. Lāmā Tāranātha also mentions this anarchical condition of the country.

Though Buddhism was the state-religion, Brāhmaṇical religious systems, where Viṣṇu or Śiva figured as cult-god, were no less popular. Some of the epigraphic records of the Pāla period bear evidences that Vaiṣṇavism was prevalent among the high officials as well as the common people, There are also evidences to show that the *paurāṇic* stories relating to Kṛṣṇa and other incarnations of Viṣṇu were not unknown to the people.

Numerous images of Viṣṇu and his incarnations, belonging to the Pāla period. have been unearthed from different places of Bengal. The Gupta art while travelling towards Bengal led to the evolution of the 'Pāla School' in the beginning of the 9th century A.D., just after the formation of the 1st Empire of the Pālas. As the sculptural remains of the 'Pāla School' have been found in the eastern provinces of India, and as the influences of the same have been noticed on the specimens from the outlying provinces of India like Nepāl and Tibet, the new School was also designated by some as the 'Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture', which continued to produce art-objects till the end of the 12th century A.D.[3]

Some of the plastic representions from Pāhāḍpur bear a distinct stamp of early Pāla idiom or style.

The epigraphic records of the Pālas begin with an invocation to the Buddha, and many kings of the dynasty are known to have been great patrons of Buddhism. Like Gopāla, the first king of the dynasty, his illustrious successors were all ardent followers of the religion of the Buddha , and for nearly four centuries their Court proved to have been the last stronghold of that religion which gradually lost its position in India.

Although, Dharmapāla was a staunch Buddhist, he did not act like a bigot. Epigraphic evidences also support this contention. The *Keśava Praśasti*[4], dated in the 26th regnal year of this king, refers to the establishment of a four-faced image of Mahādeva by Keśava, one of his subjects. The

Khalimpur copper plate inscription[5], dated in his 32nd regnal year, refers to the grant of four villages to a Lāṭa Brāhmin together with other subordinate priests, attached to the temple of Nanna (or Nunna)-Nārayaṇa at Śubhasthalī by the king at the request of the *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Nārāyaṇavarman. The meaning of the word 'Nanna' (or, Nunna)-Nārāyaṇa is difficult to be interpreted. In several other inscriptions the name of the deity mentioned in them is usually prefixed with the honorific title of 'Śrī', such as 'Śrī Nārāyaṇa-Bhaṭṭāraka' ; but there is no such honorific prefix here. That may show that the word 'Nanna' (or 'Nunna') did not form a part of the god's name. In the opinion of Kielhorn[6] the correct reading is Nunna-Nārāyaṇa, 'Nunna' being the name of the father of the founder of the temple dedicated to the god Nārāyaṇa. So, 'Nunna'-Nārāyaṇa in this case will refer to god Nārāyaṇa as named after 'Nunna'. But, Kielhorn is not sure of this reading and interpretation, he has given the alternative reading as 'Nanna'. 'Nanna', according fo him, was possibly another name of the founder. The name also reminds him of the temple of the god Kamalā-Nārāyaṇa at Degambay, erected by the Kadamba queen of Kamalādevī[7]. It is interesting to note that the proper names 'Nunna' or 'Nanniya' were common in Mahārāṣṭra and Karṇāṭaka in the early medieval period. One of the *Bodhgayā inscriptions*[8], dated in the regnal year 15, preserves the memory of a Rāṣṭrakuṭa chief Tuṅga-Dharmāvaloka. the son of Kīrtirāja and the grandson of Nanna-Guṇāvaloka,

It is said that many inhabitants of the Lāṭa (Gujarāṭ) and Karṇāṭaka countries migrated to the provinces of Bengal and Bihar during the reign of the Pālas. It is stated in the *Khalimpur copper-plate inscription* that the Lāṭa Brāhmins were in the charge of the temple of Nanna-Nārāyaṇa and were benefited by the liberal donations of king Dharmapāla. It is to be considered whether, an inhabitant of Lāṭa-deśa, bearing the name 'Nanna' was responsible for naming the god Nārāyaṇa after him.[9] The ancient country of Lāṭa is

generally taken to represent the modern state of Gujarāt. According to some, Lāṭa is a variant form of Lāḷa or Lāḍha, i.e. Rāḍha. But, in the humble opinion of the present writer Lāṭa, mentioned in the aforesaid inscription, really stood for Gujarat. There was, however, a region in south Bengal known as Gujarāt,[9] in the medieval images. The view of Dr. N. R. Ray, that Nanna-Nārāyaṇa was the colloquial Bengali form of Nanda-Nārāyaṇa, does not appear to be a convincing one.[10]

The existence of a temple of Kādambarī (a name of Sarasvatī or Revatī) is also proved by the *Khalimpur inscription*. Apart from this, the record also refers to some of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, viz. Kṛṣṇa (Muraripu), Rāma-Dāśarathī (Rāghava) and Paraśurāma.

Of the two epigraphic records, issued by Nārāyaṇapāla, the *Gayā stone inscription* will be discussed later on. The *Bhāgalpur copper-plate inscription*,[11] dated in the 17th regnal year of Nārāyaṇapāla, refers to the consecration of an image of Śiva at Kalasapota. The envoy of the grant was great Gurava Bhaṭṭa (or Miśra), the minister of Nārāyaṇapāla. The Varāha and Vāmana incarnations of Viṣṇu have been referred to in lines 5-8.

The *Gayā stone inscription*[12] of king Nārāyaṇapāla, dated in the year 7, begins with an invocation to the Nṛsiṁha incarnation of Viṣṇu, also known as Puruṣottama, Eka Murāri and Lokaikanātha.

The next important epigraphic record comes from Bādāl, also known as Maṅgalvāḍī-hāṭ, in North Bengal (Dt. Dinajpur). The *Bādāl pillar inscription*[13] of the time of king Nārāyaṇapāla was issued by the same Gurava Miśra (Bhaṭṭa). The inscription (which is incised on a pillar) records the setting up of the pillar, surmounted by the figure of Garuḍa,[14] and contains a panegyrical account of Gurava Miśra and his ancestors. Gurava Miśra was a devotee of Viṣṇu. In line 26 of this pillar-inscription he has been described as a friend of Hari. It is also interesting to note that while Gurava Miśra

has been compared with Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa, Paraśurāma and Puruṣottama his mother, Vavvā, with Yaśodā and Devakī (v. 17). The expression, '*Gopāla-priya-kāraka*,' mentioned in the same verse may also be applied to Gurava. That Yaśodā was not the real mother of Kṛṣṇa, is also hinted at in verse 17. Does the verse bear any veiled reference to Gurava and his foster-mother as well as the real mother? In line 18 of the same inscription Gurava Miśra has been described as a second Rāma, i.e. Paraśurāma, for he was also a scion of the 'Jāmadagni-kula'. He has also been described as belonging to the 'Śāṇḍilya-gotra,' whose *vīji-puruṣa* was Viṣṇu. The expression, '*Śrīkānto' pi a-kṛṣṇakarmā*', attributed both to Gurava and Kṛṣṇa in the inscription, has been interpreted by some as not containing any ill remark against Kṛṣṇa, so far as his role in the *Mahābhārata* was concerned. *Śrīkānta* is a name of Viṣṇu. The word *Kṛṣṇakarmā* will denote the 'black deeds of Kṛṣṇa.' In the case of Gurava, it will mean that though he was likened to *Śrīkānta* (Viṣṇu) he did not perform any 'black deed'—i.e., he was comparable with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, without the lower sides of the latter (Kṛṣṇa). The engraver of the grant was one Viṣṇubhadra, possibly a Vaiṣṇava.

During the second half of the 10th century A.D. the Kāmbojas founded an empire in the western and northern parts of Bengal with their capital at Priyaṅgu in North Bengal. The Kāmboja kings, Rājyapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla and Nayapāla, were believers in the Brāhmaṇical faiths. Of these Nārāyaṇapāla was a Viṣṇava. The inscriptional evidence of the Kāmbojas testifies to this (cf. *sa Vāsudeva-pād-av* (*b*) *ja-pūjā-nirata-mānasaḥ, v. 13, Irdā c.p.*)[15]

The next epigraph, important for our purpose, comes from Bāghāurā village near Brāhmaṇbāḍiā, dt. Tipperah.[16] The *Bāghāurā image inscription* was issued during the 3rd regnal year of king Mahīpāla I, the son and successor of king Vigrahapāla II. King Mahīpāla I brought a new epoch in the annals of the Pāla dynasty inasmuch as he revived the Pāla empire from a moribund state. The inscription

shows that the kingdom of Mahīpāla I also included the Samataṭa region. The inscription, engraved under the lotus-feet of a standing image of god Nārāyaṇa (Vāsudeva) of about three feet in height, records that a certain Vaiṣṇava merchant, Lokadatta, son of Vasudatta and an inhabitant of village Vilakīndaka installed an image of the god in Samataṭa in the 3rd regnal year of king Mahīpāla I. In lines 2 and 3 of the inscription, it is stated that the said merchant caused the consecration of an image of the god in question for the furtherance of the religious merit of himself as well as of his parents. It is apparent that the family of Lokadatta had Vaiṣṇavite leanings. It also appears from a study of the inscription that the said image was possibly consecrated in a temple in village Vilakīndaka (of the Samataṭa region). This inscription also proves that a certain portion of Samataṭa was a stronghold of Vaiṣṇavism. It may not be out of place here to mention that a discrepancy has crept in naming the deity as Nārāyaṇa, for it has been rightly shown by Dr. J. N. Banerjea[17] that the mode of placing the attributes in the four hands of the deity would indicate that this image was one of Trivikrama-Viṣṇu of the order of the 'Crturviṁśati mūrtis' (cf. iconographic chapters of the *Agni* and *Padma purāṇas* and the *Rūpamaṇḍan*).

The aforesaid *Bāghāurā image inscription* as also three other inscriptions discovered in Bengal, viz. the *Pāikpāḍā-Betkā Vāsudeva image inscription*[18] of the time of Govindacandra and the *Madanapāḍā*[19] and *Madhyapāḍā copper plate*[20] *inscriptions* of king Viśvarūpasena, are not only important for the study of religious history of Bengal in the medieval period, but they also show that the 'merchant community' as a whole (including the betel-growers) showed their inclination to Vaiṣṇavism. At a later date, i.e. in the 15th-16th century A.D., we see that the merchants of the Saptagrāma-Triveṇī region were Vaiṣṇava by faith ; and it was these people who helped the great apostle of Vaiṣṇavism, Nityānanda in preach-

ing the Vaiṣṇava ideals in the said region.[21] This region was a great stronghold of Vaiṣṇavism even in the Sena period (cf. the *Pavanadūtam* of Dhoyī and the *Dargāh* of Zāfar Khān Gāzi, built on the ruins of a Vaiṣṇava temple).[22]

That the merchant community took an important part in the dissemination of Vaiṣṇava faith, has conclusively been proved by the discovery of some *seals* and *c. p. inscriptions* both in and outside Bengal. As regards the *seals* discovered outside Bengal, it may be pointed out that the *seal* no. 93 from Basārh in north Bihar, representing 'the goddess of wealth' with a barge-like object in her front, was said to have been issued by 'the guild of merchants' of ancient Vaiśālī.[23] Similarly, two inscriptions, discovered respectively from Bhilsā in the M. P. (V. S. 935) and Sīyāḍonī in the U. P. (V. S. 1005) refer to the gifts of merchants in honour of lord Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu.[24]

Of other epigraphic records, issued by Mahīpāla I, mention may be made of the *Bāngaḍh c. p. inscription,*[25] *the Imādpur bronze image inscription*[26] and the *Kurkihār Bronze Image inscription,*[27] one after another.

The *Bāngaḍh c. p. inscription,*[28] dated in the 9th regnal year of Mahīpāla records the gift of a village to Kṛṣṇāditya-śarman, a Brāhmin, son of Bhaṭṭaputra Madhusūdana and grandson of Bhaṭṭaputra Hṛṣīkeśa. All these names are of Vaiṣṇavite character.

The *Imādpur bronze images*[29] are dated in the 48th (according to some, 148, *Newārī Saṁvat*—1028 A.D.) regnal year of the aforesaid king. These images, made of metal, were discovered from Imādpur, dt. Muzaffarpur in Bihar, but are now housed in the 'King Edward VII Gallery' of the British Museum. These beautiful bronze images, showing a fine sense of balance and proportion on the part of the artist, have been identified by late C. C. Dasgupta as Lakṣmī, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Balarāma.[30] But, it has been rightly shown by J. N. Banerjea that these bronze images (rather the composite bronze-image) really stood for a composite re-

presentation of Ekānaṁśā (Durgā) between Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva.[31] But, Ekānaṁśā can be identified with Subhadrā, the sister of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma (cf. the *Bṛhāt Saṁhitā* and *Viṣṇudharmottaram*). It may be pointed out here that this composite image-group was possibly the principal object of worship in the main sanctum of the temple of Ananta-Vāsudeva at Bhuvaneśvara also. It seems that Ekānaṁśā was a Śākta deity ; but consequent to her identification with Subhadrā, she was taken within the fold of Vaiṣṇavism. A living example of the worship of the aforesaid images may be seen in the temples of Jagannātha and Vimalā at Purī. 'A local super-imposition of Vaiṣṇavism over Śāktism' has been traced by J. Ghosh in these images.[32] It appears from a study of the above that the 'cult of Ekānaṁśā' had its home in East India in the early medieval period.[33]

Attention of scholars may be drawn to another inscription of king Mahīpāla I, incised on a bronze image and bearing the regnal year 52 of the king, where the conversion of one Narasiṁha Caturvedin of Kāñcī to Buddhism is mentioned.[34] Narasiṁha was an erudite Brāhmin; and after the conversion, his name was changed to Prajñāsiṁha. Was he originally a Vaiṣṇava ? His name, Narasiṁha, would possibly suggest that the conversion of a Hindu Brāhmin to Buddhism was not a rare incident in those days. Bānabhaṭṭa states that the great Buddhist saint Divākaramitra was a Brāhmin in the prime of his youth (*Harṣacarita, Ucchvāsa VII*).

The next important epigraphic record[35], depicting the erection of an image of Viṣṇu, comes from Pāikpāḍā-Betkā in East Bengal. This inscription, incised on the pedestal of an image of Vāsudeva (a form of Viṣṇu) and issued in the 23rd regnal year (according to some, in the 12th regnal year) of king Govindacandra (a scion of the Candras?) records the erection of an image of Vāsudeva at Pāikpāḍā by a devout Vaiṣṇava, Gaṅgādāsa, who was a Vālajika by profession. The image of Vāsudeva, in question, has been widely acclaimed by scholars as a fine specimen of Bengal sculpture. The

image, carved in black stone, is about four feet in height; and stands on a pedestal in the centre of which Garuḍa (the vehicle of Viṣṇu) is shown. It (the image) is profusely ornamented and soft-featured. The miniature figures of Cakrapuruṣa and Śaṅkhapuruṣa are placed at both ends of the pedestal. Regarding the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on the different castes of Bengal, excluding the Brāhmins, it may be noted that the Vālajikas or Bāruis (variant form is Vārayi), the betel-growers, mentioned in this inscription (as well as in two other inscriptions of a slightly later date, viz. the *Madanapāḍā* and *Madhyapāḍā c. p. grants* of king Viśvarūpasena) professed Vaiṣṇavism, and installed images of Viṣṇu for worship. It shows that Vaiṣṇavism also penetrated into the lower strata of the society.

Bengal is a land of syncretistic experiments so far as religious systems are concerned. In the past too, such, activities were noticed here. Without entering into details about the same, we may refer to some stray cases. The *Tortoise-shell inscriptions*, discovered from Vajrayoginī in East Bengal[36], for example, may bear evidence as to a rapprochement between Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism. Palaeographically, these inscriptions may be dated in the 11th century A. D. The inscriptions record that one Manaṁraśarman issued them in order to proclaim his faith in both Vāsudeva and the Buddha. They not only establish a rapprochement between the worship of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and that of the Buddha, but also associate 'the Dharma cult' with Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism at the same time. The 'cult of Dharma' appears to have had its origin in the 'totemistic worship' of tortoise, boar etc., prevalent among the tribals of ancient India. Later on, it was associated with the worship of Dakṣiṇa Rāya, Paṭ-Ṭhākur, Bon Bibi and various other *laukika* gods. The 'Dharma worship' is now, however, confined only to West Bengal and parts of Orissa and Bihar. It seems that the worship of tortoise or kūrma, an integral part of the 'cult of Dharma,' was influenced by both Buddhism and Vaiṣṇavism.[37] It may be pointed out

here that Kūrma was included in the list of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu in the long past. The aforesaid inscriptions, thus, give us an idea about the syncretism of three cults, viz. Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism and Dharma (cult) in Bengal in the 11th century A. D. It is not necessary here to discuss the worship of syncretic icons like Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara, Śiva-Lokeśvara and Sūrya-Lokeśvara, in Eastern India, including Bengal, during the medieval times. It will suffice here to state that a mass of crude and local religious ideas as well as practices (of purely indigenous origin), perceptible in the 'cult of Dharma', got mixed up with some crypto-Buddhistic ideas in course of time. The worship of Dharma-devatā was no doubt very popular in Bengal in the medieval times.

The (two) aforesaid inscriptions are not only important from the point of view of the syncretism of the three cults, but they also throw an welcome light on the political situation of the then Eastern Bengal. Non-mention of any sovereign emperor, belonging either to the Pāla or any other allied dynasty, in these inscriptions would suggest that there was no worth mentioning king in the region during this period. The Pāla kingdom was possibly passing through a great crisis at that time. External aggression and internal troubles might have been responsible for this state of affairs. Some of the chieftains or 'vassal' rulers under the Pālas probably declared their independence. A major portion of Bengal was lost to the Pāla rulers; and South Bihar, too, was trying to shake off its yoke. Several other epigraphic records from the Gayā region appear also to bear out this conclusion.

Mention may now be made of the *Gayā Kṛṣṇadvārikā Temple inscription,*[38] *Gayā Nṛsiṁha Temple inscription*[39], *Gayā Śītalā* (?) *Temple inscription*[40] and *Rāmgayā Daśāvatāra Temple inscription.*[41] They either refer to the temples of Viṣṇu in his various forms or incarnations (*avatāras*) or the different forms of Viṣṇu.

Of these the first two inscriptions were issued in the regnal year 15 of king Nayapāla of the Pāla dynasty. The *Gayā*

Kṛṣṇadvārikā Temple inscription,[42] found within the compound of the Viṣṇupāda temple, records the erection of a temple in honour of god Janārddana (a form of Viṣṇu) by Viśvāditya. The invocatory passage of this inscription praises god Vāsudeva. It is also interesting to note that the father of Viśvāditya has been compared with Murāri and Nārāyaṇa. The *Gayā Nṛsiṁha Temple inscription*,[43] found originally within the temple of Nṛsiṁha (a few yards behind that of Gadādhara), records the construction of shrines in honour of Gadādhara (a form of Viṣṇu) and other deities at Gayā. This inscription, issued by Viśvarūpa (the brother of Viśvāditya) invokes deities Lakṣmī and Puruṣottama. It has been suggested by some scholars that the materials used in the modern temples of Gadādhara and Kṛṣṇadvārikā, might have been taken from the remains of the earlier temples built there by Viśvāditya or Viśvarūpa.[44] From the inscriptional evidences, it is clear that the family of Viśvarūpa and Viśvāditya was devoted to god Viṣṇu.

The third stone inscription, found at the so-called Śītalā Temple at Gayā, shows that god Nārāyaṇa was worshipped in the Gayā region during the reign of king Yakṣapāla in the 12th century A. D.[45] This inscription also shows that the composite icon of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa (mentioned in the inscription as 'Kamalārddhāṅgina-Nārāyaṇa' (cf. Kamalā-Nārāyaṇa temple at Degambay) along with Maunāditya and Vijayāditya, possibly two forms of Sūrya, were worshipped in the adjoining regions of Bengal in the 12th century A.D.[46] The worship of the composite icon of Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa probably started few centuries earlier. It is interesting to note that Āliṅgana-mûrtis of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, unlike their Śaivite counterpart, are very rare in Bengal and its adjoining regions ; only two late specimens of this type carved in stone have till now been found in Bengal. Some specimens of the same in bronze and octo-alloy showing Pāla influences have been found in Bengal. In the context of the specific reference to this composite icon

in the *Śītalā temple inscription* it will be perhaps difficult for us to subscribe to the views of Dr. N. R. Ray that the worship of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images was first introduced by the Vaiṣṇavite Sena rulers in Bengal.[47] The Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa worship was possibly introduced in Bengal and its adjoining regions in the 11th century A.D., if not earlier. It was not possibly introduced by the early Sena rulers, who were followers of the Vīra-Śaiva branch of Śaivism.

The history of Bengal in the second half of the 11th century A.D. is the history of the gradual dismemberment of the Pāla empire. Powerful chieftains and vassal-kings hurdled defiance at the Pālas ; and, as a result of it new powers arose. Parts of East Bengal were occupied by the Buddhist Candras and Vaiṣṇava Varmans in quick succession. The Varmans drove out the Candras, when there was a brisk movement going in Bengal to revive Brāhmaṇical culture. The Vaiṣṇava Varmans, who ruled over East Bengal, had their headquarters at Vikrampur. Our information regarding the history of the Varman dynasty is chiefly derived from the *Belāva copper plate inscription*[48] of Bhojavarman, *Sāmantasār copper plate inscription*[49] of Harivarman, *Vajrayoginī copper plate inscription*[50] of Sāmalavarman and *Bhuvaneśvara Praśasti*[51] of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II). From a study of these grants, we come to know that both Harivarman and Sāmalavarman were sons of Jātavarman ; that Bhojavarman was the son of Harivarman ; that these kings bore the title *parama-vaiṣṇava* ; that the wheel (*cakra*) of Viṣṇu was attached to their respective grants ; and that the lands were granted in honour of god Vāsudeva. Kings Jātavarman, Karṇa of the Kalacuri-Cedis and Vigrahapāla III were contemporaries.

The *Sāmantasar c. p. grant*[52] of the reign of Harivarmandeva (probably dated in this 42nd regnal year) records the gift of land in the village Varaparvata (Vaṭagrāma or Baṭariyā) in the Mayūrāvīḍja-*viṣaya* in the Puṇḍravardhana-*bhukti*.[53] The *Viṣṇu-cakra* seal, the royal insignia of the Varmans, was attached to the c. p. grant of this king also.

The *Vajrayoginī c. p. grant*[54] of the time of Sāmalavarman, brother of Harivarman, though records the gift of land to the temple of Prajñāpāramitā has possibly a *Viṣṇu-cakra* seal attached to it.

The next important grant necessary for our purpose was issued by Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II), probably a minister of the unnamed son of king Harivarman. The grant is known to the scholars as the *Bhuvaneśvara Praśasti.*[55] This *Praśasti* begins with an obeisance to god Vāsudeva and is followed by invocations to Hari and Vāgdevatā. Besides giving a genealogical account of Bhavadeva (II), the record describes the erection of a lofty wheel-crested temple and installation of the images of Nārāyaṇa, Ananta and Nṛsiṁha in the inner sanctum of the same. Other associates of the god such as Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, as well as Garuḍa (*pattrin*) are mentioned in line 15 of the grant. The arrangement of deities described in line 15 follows perfectly the rules of iconography. Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II) has been compared in the inscription with Hari (Viṣṇu). Not only that, his immediate predecessors have also been compared with the relations of (Viṣṇu-) Kṛṣṇa. For example, while Bhavadeva (I) and Govardhana, the grandfather and father respectively of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II), have been compared with Kaśyapa, the *Vījipuruṣa* and Kāśyapa—a compeer of Acyuta-Kṛṣṇa, the mother of Govardhana with Devakī. Mythologically Kaśyapa has been conceived as the father of Viṣṇu.

Verses 28 and 29 of the aforesaid inscription describe the installation of the images of gods Nārāyaṇa (of lithic form), Ananta and Nṛsiṁha in the respective sanctums of a temple, which excelled even the Kailāsa mountain, the abode of Tripurāntaka-Śiva in beauty and height, and surmounted by the emblem of Viṣṇu, the wheel (*cakra*) on the *śikhara*. In verse 31, again, it is said that a tank (like the *ṭeppākulam* of the temples of the south) was excavated by the donee in front of the said temple, which bore the reflections of the same thereby causing the anxiety of the serpents. The mythical story of

the chastisement of the *nāga*-Kālīya by Kṛṣṇa has probably been hinted at here. Like many other contemporary temples of this period as also of later times, a large number (100) of beautiful damsels (*vārarāmās* or *devadāsīs*) were engaged in the services of deities in the present temple (cf. verse 30).

Formerly, scholars were of opinion that the temple, mentioned in the *Bhuvaneśvara Praśasti* of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II) was identical with the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple, standing close to the temple of Liṅgarāja (mentioned as Tribhuvaneśvara in the inscription) on the eastern bank of the Vindusāgara tank (designated as pool in the inscription) in the centre of the town of Bhuvaneśvara. Messrs. R. L. Mitra, N. N. Vasu, M. M. Chakraberty and N. G. Majumdar held the aforesaid view.[56] But in recent times, this has been challenged by some scholars, who held that the inscription in question did not originally belong to the temple of Ananta-Vāsudeva, or even to Orissa. In the opinion of P. Acarya,[57] the stone slab containing the *Praśasti* of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II) was never fixed on any temple. He has offered fairly sound reasons in support of his view that this inscription was wrongly sent from the Asiatic Society (Calcutta) in place of another Orissan epigraph which was previously taken to the Society from the temple compound. According to him, the *Praśasti* in stone originally belonged to some medieval Vaiṣṇava temple in Bengal, from the ruins of which it was removed to the Asiatic Society. Late D. C. Bhattacharya[58] said that the temple in question was situated at Vikrampur, the capital city of the Varmans. But, in the opinion of the present writer, the temple in question was probably either situated at Sidhlā (Siddhala, mentioned in it as well as in the *Belāva grant*) in the district of Birbhum or at Devagrāma in Nadiya district.[59] According to Sandhyākara Nandin, the commentator of the *Rāmacaritam*,[60] Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva (II), who bore the title 'Bāla-Valabhi-bhujaṅga', was possibly a resident of Devagrāma. During the Sena ascendancy, a strong military garrison was possibly situated in this place. But the

location of the temple-site at Sidhlā near the historical sites like Lābhpur, Kīrṇāhār and Nānnur (all in the district of Birbhum) may not be ruled out as impossible. This does not, of course, rule out the possibility of the grant being issued by Bhavadeva (II) from Vikramapura in East Bengal.

Our information about the Varman dynasty (of East Bengal) is chiefly derived from the *Belāva copper plate grant*[61] of king Bhojavarman. It is learnt from the grant that the Varmans were known as 'Yādavas,' as they traced their origin from Yadu. Their original home was Siṁhapura. The location of this place, however, is uncertain; the name has been equated by some scholars with that of Siṅgur, a village in the Hughly district of West Bengal.[62] It is interesting to note that the kings and queens of the Varman dynasty have been compared with divinities like Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa and Lakṣmī. Lines 5 and 6 of the grant seem to indicate that Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī re-incarnated themselves as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Manifestations of Viṣṇu have also been described in the next few lines. In line 6 the 'descent' of Hari to this world as Kṛṣṇa, 'who though a partial incarnation of Viṣṇu,[63] sported with one-hundred milk-maids as the stage-manager of the *Mahābhārata*.' Indeed the Varmans have been described here as the relatives of Kṛṣṇa. King Harivarman of the Yādava dynasty has been compared with Kṛṣṇa of the Sātvata (Hari is also a name of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa). It is apparent from a study of the grant in question that both the epic and *paurāṇic* stories relating to the Kṛṣṇa saga were mingled or synthesized in Bengal in the early medieval times. It is also clear from this epigraphic record that the royal panegyrists of the medieval times had a peculiar fancy in comparing the royal personages (patrons) with Viṣṇu and his incarnations. When the kings were Śaivas or Buddhists, similar associations of theirs with Śiva or Buddha were suggested by their *praśastikāras*. Apart from naming Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, the Varāha and Dāśarathī-Rāma incarnations have also been referred. King Bhojavarman, as the grant shows, was a *parama-vaiṣṇava*,

So, it was but natural that land was given by means of a charter, affixed to a seal of *Viṣṇu-cakra*, in the name of god Vāsudeva.

While, resuming the history of the Pālas, it may be observed that the bulk of our information regarding the reign of king Rāmapāla is supplied by the *Rāmacaritam* of Sandhyākaranandin; the *Tetrāwan inscription*,[64] dated in the 2nd regnal year of king Rāmapāla; and *Caṇḍīmau image inscription*,[65] dated in his 42nd regnal year. As regards the *Rāmacaritam*, it may be stated that this unique 'historical *kāvya*' supplies us a long narrative of the history of Bengal for about three quarters of a century (from A.D. 1070—1145)—covering the reign-periods of Rāmapāla as well as his immediate successors and vassals. The book also gives us a glimpse of the prevailing religious condition of contemporary Bengal. The work, written all through in 'double entendre', aims at describing the exploits of both Rāghava-Rāma and Rāmapāla. Quite a good number of scholars have tried to appreciate the literary merits of the works and utilise its historical materials for reconstructing the political history of the then Bengal, but very few have made efforts to glean out materials for religious history. In the following paragraphs, an endeavour will be made to review the work from that angle. From a study of the *Rāmcaritam* (IV, 7, 9, 25, 30-31), it is clear that various Brāhmanical deities, including, Viṣṇu were worshipped in the Varendrī region. Viṣṇu or Hari was conceived as a four-armed deity with wheel, conchshell, mace and (*nandaka*) sword as his attributes, and Garuḍa as his vehicle (I. 19). Various incarnations of Viṣṇu[66], such as Vāmana, Varāha, Narasiṁha, Rāma-Dāśarathī, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are mentioned (I. 2, 12 ; I. 4 ; *Kav. Pr.* 19 ; *K, P.* 7-9, 11 ; IV, 27 ; I. 1, 19 etc.). Verses 32-37 of Canto III of this work refer to the erection of a beautiful temple of lord Viṣṇu or Hari by Rāmapāla, which was adorned with jewels and diadems and was frequented by the visits of the king.

It is interesting to note that various legends connected with the Kṛṣṇa saga were known to the poet Sandhyākaranandin, for some verses of his work refer to the episodes in the life of Kṛṣṇa such as the slaying of Kaṁsa, lifting up of the Govardhana hill, taming of Kālīyanāga, etc. (I. 2. IV. 47 ; K. P. 12 ; IV).[67]. The *purāṇic* account of Kṛṣṇa, the delighter of Yaśodā and Nandagopa, is also known to the poet (I. 19). The description of young Kṛṣṇa, given in I. 1 etc., reminds one of the beautiful Kṛṣṇa panels of Pāhāḍpur temple. It appears that Sandhyākaranandin was well-conversant with the incidents from the early life of Kṛṣṇa, so popular in the Gupta and Pāla times.

On the evidence of verses 7, 9, 25, 30-31 of Canto IV of the *Rāmacaritam*, it may be observed that the Varendrī region, which contained some good cities like Rāmāvatī, Skandanagara, Śoṇitapura and Jagaddala, had many lofty and beautiful temples in them. Some of the following Brāhmanical deities, viz. Viṣṇu, Umā-Maheśvara, Skanda, Vināyaka, Brahmā and the twelve Ādityas might have been enshrined there, for they are named in this *Kāvya*. The city of Puṇḍravardhanapura is said to have been served by deities like Viṣṇu, Balabhadra (Balarāma), Śiva, Skanda, Brahmā, Bhagavatī and Cakrapāṇi-Paraśurāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu and an embodiment of *trinity* (cf. verses 21 and 24 of the *Karatoyā-māhātmya*). It is said that a certain Gadādhara (a subordinate to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings, Kṛṣṇa III and Koṭṭaga), who flourished in the middle of the 10th century A.D. or slightly later, installed in this region images of Viṣṇu, Pārvatī (Umā)-Maheśvara, Sūrya, Skanda and Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa). On the evidence of the *Rāmacaritam*, it is clear that the cities like Rāmāvatī, Śoṇitapura and Skandanagara were crowded with lofty temples.

Images of Viṣṇu and his attendants have been abundantly found in the Varendrī, comprising the districts of Maldah, Dinajpur and Bogra. In and around Mahāsthāna in the district of Bogra, there were places named after great centres of

Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in North India. The *Karatoyā-māhātmya* locates Mahāsthana in between 'Skanda Ghāṭ' and 'Govinda Ghāṭ' (cf. *Skanda Govindayormadhye bhūmiḥ saṁskṛta-vedikā* etc. *Karatoyā-māhātmya*). These two *ghāṭs* were probably named after the respective deities Skanda (Kārttikeya) and Govinda, a form of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. It is interesting to note that land-grants were given in honour of Govindasvāmin near Vāyigrāma (mod, Baigrām), some miles to the north-west of Mahāsthāna in the Gupta Period (cf. *Baigrām c.p.*). However the mounds of 'Govinda Ghāṭ' and 'Skanda Ghāṭ' are said to be[67] situated in village Gokul, one of the suburbs of Mahāsthāna. It may be mentioned in this connection that the bronze images of Ganeśa (Vināyaka) and Garuḍa have been found from a mound called 'Mankhalir Dhāp' or 'Man-kālikā-kuṇḍa' near Mahāsthāna[68]). Images of Brāhmanical deities like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Skanda, and incarnations of Viṣṇu like Varāha, Vāmana, Narasiṁha, Rāma, Paraśu-rāma, Buddha and Kalki have been found by Cunningham in and around Puṇḍravardhana (modern Mahāsthana in Bogra district)[69]. Sir R. L. Mitra has also found the images of Ṛādhā (?), Kṛṣṇa, Anantaśāyin-Viṣṇu and a host of other Brāhmanical deities in this region.[70] Images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā have also been noticed here by Bucharon Hamilton.[71]

From a study of the *Rāmacaritam* and other works and copper plate inscriptions, it is clear that king Rāmapāla was a tolerant king. That was the reason why the worship of both Brāhmanical and Buddhist deities was allowed to flourish side by side (that was also the reason why the great cities of the Varendrī region had temples of Viṣṇu and other Brāhmanical as well as Buddhist divinities). Though, the king was a *parama-saugata*, a late work entitled, *Śekh-Śubhodayā* would call him a Vaiṣṇava (cf. *dhyātvā padam cakrino—Śekh Śubhodayā*).[72] In the *Kavipraśasti* portion of the *Rāmacaritam* (v, 8) Rāmapāla has been described as an *Abhinava-Nārāyaṇāvatāra*, i.e., a new incarnation of Nārāyaṇa (though, there is a 'pun' over this expression). From a study

of the above, it may be surmised that king Rāmapāla embraced Vaiṣṇavism in the latter half of his career.

In the commentary of the *Rāmacaritam*, one Lakṣmīśūra is mentioned, who as one of the vassals of the king Rāmapāla helped him in re-conquering his 'fatherland'. This Lakṣmīśūra has been described in the commentary as 'the presiding deity of 'Apara-Mandāra', thereby comparing him with god Madhusūdana of Mandāra-parvata (?). Some scholars have identified this place, i.e. Apara-Mandāra with Gaḍh-Mandāran or Bhitar-Gaḍh near Goghāṭ in the district of Hooghly. But this 'Gaḍh' is of compartively late date, being built probably in the 16th century A. D. Moreover, there is no evidence as to the existenee of a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu in his Madhusūdana form in this region. But, as to the existence of a temple dedicated to Madhusūdana on the Mandār Hill or Baṁśi, near Bhāgalpur, the evidence of the *Prabodhacandrodaya-(nāṭaka)* of Kṛṣṇa Miśra and observations of Fleet are very important[73]. The aforesaid 'nāṭaka' (a work of 11th century A.D.), which refers to a temple of Madhusūdana near Mandāra-parvata, does not forget to make mention of the Danuja-marddana form of Viṣṇu (IV.13). Danuja-marddana is another name of Madhusūdana. The commentator of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* section of the *Skandapurāṇa* has expressly mentioned that Madhusūdana of Mandāra (-parvata?) was celebrated in Gauḍa, thereby suggesting that the place was situated in West Bengal. The *Sārnāth stone inscription*[74] of the time of Kumāradevī of the Gāhaḍavālas (*circa* 11th cen. A.D.) also states that the kingdom of Gauḍa comprised Anga (roughly covering, Bhagalpur Division) also. Fleet was also of opinion that Apara-Mandāra should be identified with Mandār Hill or Baṁśi.[75] The place, named as Kujavaṭī (i.e., modern Nayā Dumkā), and mentioned in the next line of the cemmentary of the *Rāmacaritam* (after mentioning Apara-Mandāra), is not far off from Mandār Hill, and both are under the Bhāgalpur Division. It is interesting to note that besides a temple of Madhusūdana, the hill contains few

small temples as well as some ancient life-size and small images, of which mention may be made particularly of the rock-cut images of the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha and a life-size Viṣṇu. So, from all these considerations, it would not be improper to suggest that Apara-Mandāra (i.e.. Western Mandāra ?) should be identified with Mandār Hill and its surroundings.

The epigraphic records, issued by the last three Pāla kings, are unimportant for our purpose. As regards another king, whose name ends with Pāla, viz. Govindapāla scholars doubt as to whether he belonged to the Imperial Pāla dynasty or not. In this connection mention may be made of other kings whose names also ended in Pāla. They are Yakṣapāla and Palapāla, But, they do not appear to have belonged to the Imperial Pāla dynasty. The ins. of Yakṣapāla has been discussed already. Now, the *Gayā stone inscription,*[76] issued in the 14th year of the *gata-rājya* of Govidapāla and dated in V.S. 1232, begins with an obeisance to god Vāsudeva. It contains also various names or forms of Viṣṇu. such as Gadābhṛt, Padmanābha, Rāghava, Śrīdhara, Nṛsiṁha and Viśvarūpa.

Attention of scholars may now be drawn to the *Kamauli copper plate grant*[77] of king Vaidyadeva (of yr. 4; i.e., the last quarter of the 11th or 1st quarter of the 12th century A.D.), once the chief counsellor of the Pāla king Kumārapāla (son of Rāmapāla). King Vaidyadeva was a devout Vaiṣṇava, who always meditated on the feet of Viṣṇu. The grant begins with an invocation to Viṣnu in his Varāha form. It is next followed by 'the twelve-syllabled *mantra*', *Oṁ nama Bhagavate Vāsudevāya.* The Boar incarnation is also hinted at. Śrī-Hari or Viṣṇu is conceived here as 'the measurement-rod of the firmament' and 'the receptacle of the seed (of creation)' (cf. the traits of *Vedic* Viṣṇu). The idea that the sun is 'the right eye of Viṣṇu of Śrī-Hari' may point to the fact that the conception of 'the solar origin' of Viṣṇu has not yet been forgotten. Of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Vāmana, Narasiṁha,

Paraśurāma and Kṛṣṇa are mentioned. It is interesting to note that Vaidyadeva calls himself both *paramavaiṣṇava* and *paramamāheśvara* in the grant issued by him. This shows that the king was a tolerant and believed in religious syncretism.

'It has already been shown that in the early Gupta inscriptions gods, who bore *Vedic* epithets, did not have any real connection with the *Vedic* rituals. The mythological stories (of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, Śīva and other deities) had begun to be popular already in the Kuṣāṇa period; and with the development of religious system in the Gupta period such (mythological) stories went on developing. This tendency was noticed in Bengal, also; for the epigraphic records of the Guptas, Pālas, Senas and other contemporary dynasties, found in Bengal, bear ample testimony to the same. The tawney-eyed Viṣṇu, who attained his fame as the destroyer of demons like Mura, Madhu and Kaiṭabha, is no longer the same old god of the Vaiṣṇavas or *Bhāgavatas* he has by the early medieval times undergone many a change. Emergence of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa as a god of love—an endearing one—is an important event of the early medieval times, if not of the earlier times. From now onwards the child-form of Kṛṣṇa (Kānu) became the pet object of adoring endearment in many households in Bengal (cf. temple plaques at Paharpur & other places in Bengal). The Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa element was possibly working in the background. That is why the paurāṇic exploits of Kṛṣṇa, including his love-romances, were either extolled or sung by his worshipping devotees. The 'Kṛṣṇa saga' has gone far to revivify the lyrical literature of India in the post-Gupta and the medieval periods.

The popularity of the 'cult of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva' is further evidenced by the sculptural representations of the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* scenes in different parts of India. At Pāhāḍpur in North Bengal, the Bengalee sculptors depicted many *Kṛṣṇāyana* scenes through the medium of stone and terracotta. But, it may be pointed out here that the 'Kṛṣṇa panels' amongst

others at Pāhāḍpur were drawn from earlier constructions for decorating the basement of the temple built during the reign of the Pāla king Dharmapāla.[78] There are some other panels at Pāhāḍpur, mostly in terracotta, which illustrate stories from the *Pañcatantra*. Side by side with the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* scenes, these were also of great popular appeal. In fine, it will be worthwhile to give some idea about the literature extant during the Pāla period, which directly or indirectly deals with Vaiṣṇavism. The extensive literature of this period, however, was mostly Buddhistic in character, a large portion of which has been preserved in the Tibetan translations. Bengal had been pre-eminently a land of Buddhism even before the Pālas. It is a matter of common knowledge that during the Pāla suzerainty over Bengal there was a growing prevalence of Buddhist '*Tāntric* culture', associated with the composition of a number of *Tāntric* works. In the opinion of some scholars, these *Tāntric* works discarded asceticism and taught that the enjoyment of the senses was the 'summum bonum' of life. Magic and mysticism were no doubt at their bases; but, at the same time, it should be kept in mind that the majority of the *Tāntric* works belonging to the higher class, whether Brāhmanical or Buddhistic, presented their esoteric doctrines in an equally mystical language. The symbolic or mystic language is sometimes called *saṁdhā-bhāṣā*.[79] The *Caryāgītis* or the *Caryāpadas*, are written in such a language. These *Caryāpadas* or 'the collection of short mystical songs,' stand at the head of the Bengali literature.[80] These songs, composed sometime between A. D. 950 and 1100, may be said to be the arche-type of the *Sahajiyā* songs, the *Vaiṣṇava padas*, the *Śākta* hymns, the *Bāul* songs and even the songs of the *Sūfī* inspiration. According to MM. H. P. Sastri, these *Caryā*-songs resemble very much the *kīrttanas* of the Vaiṣṇava sect.[81] There is a close relationship between the *Caryāpadas* and *Vaiṣṇava padas* as well as the Kṛṣṇaite *kāvyas*, so far as erotic sentiment isconcerned.[82] It is interesting to note that some of the

Caryāpadas has little or no connection with *Tāntricism* of any kind. At a slightly later period, the non-Buddhistic literature received a fresh impetus from the Brāhmanical Senas. The entire literary output of Bengal in this period confined itself chiefly to Brāhmanical ritualism and poetry, as also to the *Navya Nyāya*, Brāhmanical *Tantra* and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, which emerged about three centuries later (with the consolidation of the Muhammedan rule). In the meantime, the Bengali language and literature, which was concerned in this period possibly with lost songs, hymns and ballads on the themes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopīcāṅd, Lāusena, Lakhindar, Śrīmanta and Kālaketu, was perhaps slowly being consolidated. From the uncertain beginnings of the *Caryāpada* stage, they were gradually transformed into the definite articulation of the *Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrttana* in the 14th century. The expression, *Āpanā māse harinā vairi*, occurring in one of the *Caryāpadas*, may be taken as the source of two other similar expressions, found later in the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*; viz., (a) *Yena vaner harinī la nije māse jagater vairi* and (b) *Āpanār māse harinā jagater vairī*.[83]

Of the literary compositions (called 'kāvya'), belonging to the Pāla period, the following need mention. Of the two *Rāmacaritas*, the earlier one (without double meaning) was composed by one Abhinanda, an inhabitant of Gauḍa.[84] The editor of the aforesaid work has assigned him to the court of Yuvarāja Hāravarṣa (Devapāla) (?). But, this assignment is highly problematical. Certain verses of Abhinanda have found place in the *Kavīndravanasamuccaya*.[85] But, whether this Abhinanda was identical with 'Gauḍa' Abhinanda or not cannot be ascertained at the present state of our knowledge. 'Gauḍa' Abhinanda flourished in *circa* 900 A.D. In the 9th *Canto* of the *Rāmacarita*, Abhinanda has described the following incarnations of Viṣṇu, viz., Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma and Dāśarathī-Rāma.

The *Daśāvatāracarita*[86] of the Kashmirian poet Kṣemendra, who flourished in the middle of 11th century A.D., is nothing

but a poetical abstract of the stories connected with the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. The poet has given greater attention to two of the most popular man-incarnations of Viṣṇu, viz., Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. Two verses connected with the amours of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* (including Rādhā), included in the *Daśāvatāracarita*, have also found place in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*[87]—an anthological work of a slightly later age. The *Daśāvatāracarita* is written in the spirit of a Vaiṣṇava; and it is said that Kṣemendra embraced Vaiṣṇavism in the latter part of his life. The systematization of the ten *avatāras* and the inclusion of Buddha in the list of *Daśāvatāras* were possibly propagated first by Kṣemendra. It is interesting to note that poet Jayadeva has also eulogized the ten *avatāras*, including Buddha, in his *Gītagovinda*.[88]

The *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya* is one of the oldest anthological works in Sanskrit. This (anthological) work was possibly compiled in Bengal at the end of the 10th century A.D.[89] But, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji assigns the work to *circa* 11th-12th century A.D.[90] Though written in old *Newārī* script, there are reasons to believe that the work was carried to Nepāl from Bengal at subsequent times. The work contains good number of verses composed by poets belonging to Bengal. Though, the first two 'sections' (*vrajyās*) of this work deal with the Buddha and his special form Avalokiteśvara, the editor of the same (Dr. F. W. Thomas) has said in his learned introduction to the work that 'the Buddhist character was only superficial ; for quite a good number of verses bearing affiliation to some of the deities of Brāhmanical pantheon, such as Viṣṇu or Hari, Śiva, Umā or Pārvatī have been mentioned in it.[91] A whole section has been devoted to Hari (Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa). Some verses describing the amours of the *gopīs* with Kṛṣṇa have been included in the sections called *Hari-vrajyā* and *Asatī-vrajyā*. A veiled reference to Rādhā can also be noticed in some stray verses of this work. The Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas have taken some of these verses as being spoken by Rādhā, though there is no explicit

mention of the same in them. It has been observed by some scholars of the calibre of Dr. S. B. Dasgupta that as the love-romance of Rādhā towards Kṛṣṇa was looked down upon as unchaste or illegal by the (orthodox ?) people of the medieval times, the compiler had to include verses concerning it under the head of *Asatī-vrajyā*.[92] It may be suggested that the compiler being a Buddhist, had little regard for Rādhā ; and thus, lowered her down in the estimation of the people by arranging verses connected with her amours with Kṛṣṇa under *Asatī-vrajyā*. But, why has he devoted a whole section to god Hari ? It may be argued that he has done so, not for his devotion to this particular god, but for the interest of the readers who might consult his anthological work. He has simply collected verses attributed to lord Hari (as he has done to other deities like Buddha, Lokeśvara and Sūrya), and arranged them under *Harivrajyā*.

Mythological stories connected with Viṣṇu have found place in *Harivrajyā*, such as 'the churning of the ocean', the rise of Brahmā from the navel of Viṣṇu, Viṣṇu reclining on the Śeṣa or Ananta-nāga, Viṣṇu as 'supporter of Meru' or as 'the measurement-rod of the worlds', 'intervals of sleep of Viṣṇu' (verses 20, 23, 27, 29, 33, 38, 44 and 48). The amours of Viṣṇu (Śauri-Śārṅgin) and Lakṣmī have been described in verses 20, 33, 37-8, 44 and 48 of the same.

About 14 verses are attributed to Yaśodā, Kṛṣṇa and his consort Rādhā. Of these. two verses are devoted to Kṛṣṇa and Yaśodā. Verses 35 and 46 are in the form of dialogues between Yaśodā and child Kṛṣṇa. In the former, Kṛṣṇa (*Devakī-nandana*) smiles to hear his mother telling him the story of Dāśarathī-Rāma, which is nothing but his own story in Rāma form. This verse shows that the story of Rāma, i.e. *Rāmakathā* was quite popular in Bengal in the early medieval times. In another verse (No. 46), Yaśodā warns child Kṛṣṇa about the existence of wild and ferocious animals in the hills and woods and as such advises him to meditate upon the *Purāṇa Puruṣa* Nārāyaṇa in case of any danger to which

Kṛṣṇa only restrained his smile, he himself being Nārāyaṇa. Verse No. 42 refers to the incident of 'lifting up the Govardhana hill' by Kṛṣṇa. It also describes the psychological reactions to this feat of Kṛṣṇa upon the minds of the foster-parents of Kṛṣṇa as well as of Rādhā and other *gopīs*. Everyone was amazed to see the divine qualities of Kṛṣṇa. Verses 41, 49, 501, 508-9 and 512 deal with the love-dalliances of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Verse 501 also occurs in the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānandavardhana (*circa* 9th century A.D.). Verses 508-9 and 512 do not mention the name of Rādhā. It is interesting to note that verse no. 508 has been quoted in the later Vaiṣṇava works like the *Padyāvalī* and *Gopāla-Campū* (belonging to *circa* 16th century A.D.), with slight alteration. *Verse no. 509* may well be compared with the *abhisāra padas* of the later period.

Of the incarnations of Viṣṇu the following have been described is the *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya*, viz. Matsya in vs. 25 and 35, Varāha with his *Adi* and *Yajña* forms in vs. 24 and 47. Kūrma in v. 30, Vāmana in vs. 26, 36 and 155 ('Vardhamāna' as an epithet of Viṣṇu-Vāmana occurs in v. 36; 'unnati' *in v. 155* refers to 'the highest step' of Viṣṇu), Nṛsiṁha in *vs. 28, 40, 43 and 45*, Balarāma in v. 39 and Kṛṣṇa in many verses, mention of which has already been made.

From the point of view of the 'mental attitude' of '*Bhakti*', verse No. 31 of the *Kavīndravacanasamaccaya* is of some inportance, for it describes Kṛṣṇa as 'fond of regarding with compassion those bending in devotion to him' (cf. *Bhakti-prahva-vilokana-praṇayinī*).* The next line most probably refers to the efforts of those people who are deeply engaged in meditation to see the lord, i.e. Kṛṣṇa[93]. It also styles Kṛṣṇa, *Rasikeśvara* (has it any connection with the *Rasikas* of the Vaiṣṇava *Sahajiyās* ?).

So, from a detailed study of extent archaeological as well

* See, p. 174 (v. 31)—Exegetical Notes (F. W. Thomas edn.)

as literary data, it is clear that Vaiṣṇavism was in a flourishing condition in Bengal during the Pāla epoch. During the Pāla period and after *Bhāgavatism* took a new turn and emerged as neo-Vaiṣṇavism, perceptible in the works of early medieval times, which were permeated with erotic sentiment (cf. *Gītagovinda*). It may be of some interest to scholars to notice that India of the 9th-10th century A.D. was 'Viṣṇuite or Vaiṣṇava in matters of religion' (for this opinion, see travel-accounts of Āl-Sharistāni and Āl-Biruṇī). Āl-Biruṇī[94] has seen the streets of Mathurā and other ancient places being thronged by the worshippers of Viṣṇu. That is why Āl-Bīruṇī has described Viṣṇu or Nārayāṇa (it may also be Vāsudeva) was the foremost god of the Brāhmanical pantheon. This foreign savant has described amongst others the exploits of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and different names of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu.

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Chapter II

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2 Kielhorn, *E. I.*, vol. 4, p. 243 ff., A. Maitreya, *Gauḍa Lekhamālā*, p. 9 ff.

3 R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture* (*E.I.S., M. S.*), 1933, pp. 23-24, 39 ff.

4 Also known as the *Mahābodhi inscription*. For this inscription, see, *Proc. As. Soc. Bengal*, 1880, p. 80; *J.A.S.B.* vol. 4, p. 101 ff.; also see, *Gauḍa Lekhamālā*, p. 29 ff.

5 See, line 50 of the said inscription.

6 For Kielhorn's view, see f.n. 2 *supra*.

7 Mentioned by Kielhorn, *ibid*.

8 R. L. Mitra, *Buddha Gayā*, p. 195.

9 Previously, I held the view that Nanna-Nārāyaṇa, stood really for Ananta-Nārāyaṇa (Nanna>Nanta>Ananta).

10 Dr. N. R. Ray, *Vāṅgālīr Itihāsa* (in Bengali), *Ādi Parva*, 1950, p. 616.

11 A. Maitreya, *op. cit.*, p. 55 ff.

12 R. D. Banerji, *Mem. As. Soc. Bengal*, vol. 5, *op. cit.*, p. 60 ff.

13 *E. I.*, vol. 2, p. 160 ff.; A. Maitreya, *op. cit.*, p. 70 ff.

14 Separate existence of the figures of Garuḍa is rare. The pillars surmounted by the figures of Garuḍa are generally erected in front of the Vaiṣṇava shrines.

15 *E. I.*, vol. 22, p. 150 ff. (ed. N. G. Majumdar), and vol. 24, p. 43.

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17 J. N. Banerjea, *D.H.B.*, vol. I, p. 324; D.H.I., 2nd edn., p. 324.

18 Bhattasali, *E. I.*, vol. 27, p. 26 ff.; D. C. Sircar, *I. C.*, vol., 7, p. 405 and *Bhāratvarṣa* (Bengali Monthly), Jyaiṣṭha, 1348 B. S., p. 768 ff.

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21 *Caitanya Bhāgavata* by Vṛndāvanadāsa, 5th edn., Basumati Pub.; *Antyakhaṇḍa*, p. 309 (*Vaṇik tarite Nityānanda avatār/Vaṇi-*

kere dilā premabhakti adhikār||Saptagrāma prati Vaṇiker ghare|Āpane Śrī Nityānanda kīrtan vihāre||).

22 Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, vol. I, p. 152 ff.; D. Money, *J.R.A.S.*, vol. 16, 1847, p. 393 ff; R. D. Banerji, *J.R.A.S.B.* (*N. S.*) vol. 5, pp. 245-47; *Pavana-dūtam*, ed. C. Chakraverty, Calcutta.

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24 For the *Bhilsā inscription* see, *E. I.*, Vo. 30, pp. 211-15 & for the *Sīyadonī inscription*, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 31, 1862, p. 6 ff and vol. 33, p. 227; *E. I.*, vol. 1, p. 152 ff.

25 *E. I.*, vol. 14, p. 324; vol. 22, p. 154; A. Maitreya, *op. cit.*; p. 34.

26 *I. A.*, vol. 14, p. 16, f.n. 7 ; *J.R.A.S.B.*, vol 7, p. 218 ff (C. C. Dasgupta) ; *J.R.A.S.B.*, vol. 16, 1950, pp. 347-51 (R. C. Majumdar and J. N. Banerjea); *I.H.Q.* Vol. 30, p. 47 ff. and *Proc., Ind. Hist. Congress*, 1954, p. 157 ff. (D. C. Sircar).

27 *J.B.O.R.S.*, vol. 26, pp. 37 ff.

28 See, *supra*.

29 See, *supra*.

30 See, *supra*.

31 See, *supra*.

32 *J.R.A.S.B.*, 1936, pp. 41-46.

33 See, present writer's article on the 'Cult of Ekānaṁśā' published in the *I.H.Q.*, vol. 35, pp. 189-209.

34 See, *supra*.

35 See, *supra*.

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38 R. D. Banerji, *Mem. As. Soc. Bengal*, no. 5, p. 77; A. Maitreya, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

39 Banerji, *ibid*, p. 78.

40 *Ibid*, pp. 96-97 ; Kielhorn, *I. A.*, vol. 16, p. 64 ff.

41 Banerji, *ibid*, pp . 63-64.

42 See, *supra*.

43 See, *supra*.

44 See, *Mem. As. Soc. Bengal, no. 5*, p. 77.

45 See, *supra*.

46 Dr. B. M. Barua, *Gayā and Bodh Gayā*, p. 139 ff.

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50 *Modern Review* (English Monthly), November, 1932, p. 52 ff; *Bhāratvarṣa*, Kārttik, 1340 B. S., p. 624 ff.

51 *E. I.*, vol. 6, p. 203 ff; *Mem. As. Soc. Bengal*, No. 5, pp. 97-98: *Inss. of Bengal*, vol. 3, p. 251. ff.

62 See, *supra*.

53 Varaparvata or modern Baṭāriyā is situated in the district of Malda. Can Mayūrāviḍja be identified with Mayūraśālmalī or Māḍhāśālmalī of the *Khalimpur grant*?

62 See, *Supra*.

55 *Ibid*.

56 R. L. Mitra, *Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts*. vol. 4, pp 136-37; N. N. Vasu, *Vaṅger Jātīya Itihāsa*, vol. 2, p. 131 ff.; M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B., N. S.*, vol. 8, 1912, p. 333 ff.; N. G. Majumdar, *Inss. of Bengal*, vol. 3, p. 25 ff.

57 *Proc., I. H. Congress*, 1939, p. 313.

58 *I.H.Q.*, vol. 22, p. 129.

59 Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya, Sāhityaratna has tried to equate Siddhala with Sidhalā in the district of Birbhum. For his view, please see, *Bīrbhūm Vivaraṇa* (in Bengali), Pt. II, p. 234, f.n. 8.

60 See, commentary of the *Rāmacaritam* on II. 5-8 (ed. H. P. Sastri, *Mem. As. Soc. Bengal*, Vol III). see, also the edn. of Dr. R. C. Majumdar and others.

61 See, *ante*.

62 Ed. R. G. Basak (Bengali edn. of the *Rāmacaritam*, 1953, Introduction); ed. R. C. Majumdar, R. G. Basak and N. G. Banerji, 1939 (English edn., Introduction); for location in East Bengal, see, *I.H.Q.*, 1929, p. 225 and 1936, p. 608.

63 '*Gopi-sata-kelikāraḥ Kṛṣṇo Mahābhārata-sūtradhāraḥ* etc.' v. 4, *Belāva grant*. According to Dr. N. K. Bhattasali, the explicit mention that Kṛṣṇa was an '*Aṁśāvatāra*' of Viṣṇu was probably due to the prevalence of a rival theory in East Bengal during the reign of the Varmans, which made Kṛṣṇa only a 'partial incarnation' of Viṣṇu. It is to be noted here that Kṛṣṇa was not considered till now as the '*Aṁśin*' (the whole) but '*Aṁśa*' (the part). But the position changed with the advent of Śrīcaitanya and evolution of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. The works like the *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* of Sanātana Gosvāmī, the *Laghu* or *Saṁkṣepa-bhāgavatāmṛta* of Rūpa Gosvāmī, and the '*Ṣaṭ Sandharvas*' of their nephew, Jīva Gosvāmī, give us a systematic exposition of the '*Avatāra* doctrine' of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, chiefly depending upon the *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*. Of these three, Jīva has shown that Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were not the *Aṁśas* or *Kalās* (partial manifestations) of the *Puruṣa*. According to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, Kṛṣṇa is not an *Avatāra* or incarnation, but the 'Bhagavat Himself' (*Kṛṣṇastu Bhagavān svayaṁ*). This is very interesting, indeed.

64 *J.A.S.B.*, 1872, Pt. I, p. 282.

65 Cunningham, *Arch. Survey Report*, XI, p. 169; R. D. Banerji, *M.A.S.B.*, vol. 5, pp. 93-94.

66 From IV. 46 of the *Rāmacaritam*, we come to know that

Viṣṇu has various names, such as, Acyuta, Upendra, Viṣvakṣena and Kamalākṣa.

67 *J.A.S.B.*, 1922, pp. 439-43; *J.A.S.B.*, 1878, p. 91; *District Gazetteer*, Bogra, pp. 156-159; P. C. Sen, *Baguḍār Itihāsa* (in Bengali); *Karatoyā Māhātmya, V.R.S Monographs*, No. 2, pp. 9-10; *I.H.Q.*, 1933, p. 725.

68 *V. R. Society's Monographs*, No. 2, pp. 7-8; Cunningham's *Arch. Surv. Report*, XV, pp. 106-09.

69 Cunningham, *Arch. Surv. Report*, vol. XV, pp. 106-09, 112; also see, Beveridge in the *Antiquities of Bogura, J.A.S.B.*, 1878, p 89 ff.

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80 Dr. S. K. Chatterji, *D.H.B.*, vol. 1, p. 331 ff.

81 *Hājār Bacharer Purāṇo Bauddhagāna O Dóhā* (in Bengali), *V.S.P.*, Calcutta, Introduction, p. 16 ff.

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85 *Kavīndravacanasamuccaya*, ed. Dr. F. W. Thomas. Bib. Ind., 1911. The editor of this work has identified this Abhinanda with the author of the *Kādamvarī-kathā-sāra* as well as with 'Gauḍa' Abhinanda, but has not adduced any good evidence for the same.

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92 Dr. S. B. Dasgupta, *Śrī Rādhār Kramavikāśa* etc., (in Bengali), 1356, B. S., pp. 149-50.

93 Cf. *Dhyānālambanatām samādhi-niratair-nītehita-prāptaye |*
—*Kavīndravacanasamuccaya*, v. 31.

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CHAPTER III

VAIṢṆAVISM IN THE SENA PERIOD AND AFTER.

SECTION—A: VAIṢṆAVISM IN THE SENA PERIOD

It has been shown in the last chapter that the Vaiṣṇava Varmans and the early Senas of the Śaivite faith were responsible for supplanting the Buddhist royal dynasties of the Candras and the Pālas. Not only that, the Senas were also instrumental in driving away the Vaiṣṇava Varmans from East Bengal sometime in the second quarter of the 12th century A.D. (cf. the *Barrackpur grant*[1] of king Vijayasena).

The Sena rulers supported wholeheartedly the cause of the revival of the Brāhmanical religion and culture. With the advent of these kings the prolific Buddhist and allied *Ṭāntric* literature and culture went underground for all time. Under the new regime of the Senas the non-Buddhistic Sanskrit literature and culture in Bengal received a fresh impetus. The entire literary output of Bengal in the period under review covers practically the reigns of two kings only, viz. Vallālasena and his son Lakṣmaṇasena, and it was connected chiefly with Brāhmanical ritualism and lyrical poetry (works like *Gītagovinda*). The Brāhmanical ritualistic writings were meant for regulating the daily life of the people. In a way it may be said that these protective ritualistic codes or manuals were composed in order to counteract the heretic ideas and practices of the Buddhist church. Even so, it may be said that the Brāhmanical Senas did not show any avowed hostility towards the non-orthodox systems including Buddhism. The poetical literature of the Sena period excelled that of any other period of the literary history of Bengal. The literary taste and liberality of some of the Sena kings, viz. Vallāla, Lakṣmaṇa, Keśava and Mādhava (?) may well be compared with the similar tolerant outlook of the Imperial Guptas. The Sena period may also be designated as 'the Augustan period' of Sanskrit literature in Bengal.[2]

Not only the Brāhmanical religion and literature got a fresh impetus in this period, but the Brāhmanical pantheon also, widened itself so as to include within its fold some complex or syncretic motifs like Harihara, Umā-Maheśvara etc. The Harihara motif bridges the gulf between the two major cults, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. This as well as the composite icon of Ardhanārīśvara (*-mūrtti*) of Śiva (Hara) and Pārvatī symbolise the syncretic ideology.[3] The syncretic icons like Śiva-Lokeśvara, Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara, Sūrya-Lokeśvara, Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa and Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha, belonging to the Pāla-Sena epochs have been found from Bengal and the adjoining regions.

The people of Bengal during this period used to worship deities like Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya, Śakti (Umā). The Vaiṣṇavas as well as the followers of other sects used to worship their deities according to the *tāntric* mode of worship. The attitude of religious compromise prevailing in this period was most probably responsible for making adherents of different sects adopt *Smārta* mode of worship, though, there is no doubt that such spirit was gaining ground from a much earlier period.

The early Sena rulers were Śaivas, so it was but natural that their inscriptional records should bear a seal with the figure of Sadāśiva, one of the special forms of Śiva. Accordding to the *Śaiva Āgamas*, Sadāśiva is the Most Supreme Being and corresponds to Vāsudeva of the *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* and 'Para Brahma' of the *Vedāntas*. It may be that the Sadāśiva worship was introduced in Bengal during the reign of the later Pālas, when the steady flow of the Karṇāṭaka settlers into Eastern India, specially in Bengal and Magadha (South Bihar?)[4]. The worship of Sadāśiva as well as of Śiva partly gave place to that of Viṣṇu. Evidence is there to show that the worship of Viṣṇu and his incarnations was popular during the Sena period. Numerous Viṣṇuite images belonging to this period have been found in Bengal and her neighbouring regions.

As regards the religious faith of rulers of the Sena dynasty

it may be observed that while Vijayasena and his son Vallālasena were Śaiva, the son of the latter, Lakṣmanasena was a Vaiṣṇava. Again, Viśvarūpasena and Keśavasena, the sons of the last-named king, were devoted to the Sun-god. There were some other unimportant rulers of this dynasty, but our knowledge regarding them is very imperfect. Madhusena and Mādhavasena are said to have belonged to this dynasty. A Buddhist MS., dated in 1289 A.D., ascribes the title, *parama saugata* to king Madhusena. A verse has been quoted in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (1205 A.D.) under the name of Mādhavasena. At the present stage of our knowledge, it is very difficult to say whether these two kings belonged to the Imperial Sena Dynasty, or still further, they were the same and identical.

The inscriptions of the Senas contain the names of various Brāhmanical deities. Though Brāhmanical by faith, the Sena kings were not bigots. As a matter of fact the followers of both Brāhmanical and Buddhist religious faiths flourished side by side in amity. From a study of the epigraphic records of the Senas, we come to learn that they belonged to the *Brahma-kṣatriya* clan.[5] The real meaning of the term *Brahma-kṣatriya* is not, however, clear to us. It may be that the Senas, who were Kṣatriyas by caste, became *Brahma-kṣatriyas* due to their cultivation of the Brāhmanical culture. The Senas, who came from the Deccan, were also designated as the *Karṇāṭa-kṣatriyas* in the inscriptions.[6] The *Karnāṭa-kṣatriya*-Senas probably came to Eastern India (particularly to western part of Bengal) in the company of the South Indian invaders, like the Cālukya king *Karṇāṭendu* Vikramāditya VI, the Kaḷacuri-Cedi king Karṇadeva, or Cola Emperor Rājendra Cola I.[7] They probably made a political adventure in Bengal when the political supremacy of the Pālas and Candras was on the wane. It was probable that during the regime of the Karṇāṭa Senas the neo-Vaiṣṇavism developed in Bengal. This emotional *Bhakti* cult (or Vaiṣṇavism in general), with a great deal of sublimated erotic ele-

ment in it, culminated in the composition of the *Gītagovinda* by Jayadeva, who according to the opinion of many scholars was an inhabitant of the Western part of Bengal.[8] The great poet was a contemporary of Lakṣmaṇasena. The Vaiṣṇava tenets, however, underwent profound changes during the period under review. The most important of these was the gradual dominance of the pastoral life of Kṛṣṇa and his dalliances with the *gopīs*. The *Gītagovinda*, which chiefly dwells upon the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, has been highly venerated by the Vaiṣṇavas all over India.

From a study of the epigraphic records of the Senas as well as the *Vallālacarita*,[9] we come to learn that the first historical member of the royal family was Sāmantasena, who inspite of his military achievements became a *Brahmavādin* at the fag end of his life. The next king *Mahārājādhirāja* Hemantasena was a great warrior. From the time of Vijayasena, the son and successor of Hemantasena, the small territory of the Senas began to grow into an empire of large dimensions. Both Vijayasena and his son Vallālasena were styled, *parama-māheśvara* or *parama-śaiva*. The *Govindapur grant* of king Lakṣmaṇasena, however, attributes the epithet *parama-vaiṣṇava* to king Vallālasena, probably out of an error. Though a Śaiva, Vijayasena caused the construction of the temple of Pradyumneśvara of great height and grandeur at Deopārā, near the Padumsahr tank. Verses 30 and 31 of the *Deopārā grant* of Vijayasena give a detailed account of the images consecrated within the said temple.[10] Scholars like, N.G. Majumdar and Dr. V. S. Pathak have shown that there were in all four images, namely, Pradyumna (a *vyūha* aspect of Vāsudeva), Lakṣmī, Īśvara (Śiva) and Śailajā (Pārvatī).[11] The latter has suggested that the four figures were diagrammatically arranged in the composite two-sided relief in the following way: —

Obverse—Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa (Pradyumna)

Reverse—Śiva (Īśvara) and Pārvatī (Śailajā).[11]

From a study of the lines 1 and 2 of the *Praśasti*, we learn that while the gods were placed in the extremes, the goddesses were in the middle; and that though the gods were united in this way, they were at the same time separated by the two goddesses—apparently their consorts. In the opinion of Pathak, such images can be actually found, though they are not described in iconographic texts. Attention of scholars may be drawn to verses quoted under 'Hari-Harau' and 'Kāntāsahita-Hari-Harau' in *Hari-Harau* sec. in I.33. and 1.34 respectively of the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. These images illustrate in a very characteristic[11a] manner the rapprochement between the two rival cults of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism.

Attention of scholars may be drawn to an epigraphic record of the Gupta period, namely the *Guṇaighar copper plate* of king Vainyagupta, where a temple of Pradyumneśvara has been referred to. Scholars have described Pradyumneśvara as a combined form of Hari-Hara. In the opinion of late Dr. P. C. Bagchi Pradyumneśvara presumably stood for god Viṣṇu (Pradyumna, the third *vyūha* of Vāsudeva?).[12] But there is little doubt that from the Gupta period onwards the worship of Hari-Hara, Umā-Maheśvara and Ardha-nārīśvara was popular in Bengal.[12a] Some verses from the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* of Śrīdharadāsa,[13] a work of the early 13th century A.D. (1205 A.D.), also refer to such syncretic deities.

The *Pāikore pillar inscription* of the reign of Vijayasena, dedicated to Manasā, was discovered from the *Nārāyaṇa-catvara* at Pāikore.[14] In the opinion of Harekrishna Mukherji, Sāhityaratna, Nārāyaṇa at Pāikore was worshipped according to *tāntric* rites.[15]

The respective titles of Vijayasena and Vallālasena were, *Arirāja-vṛṣabha-śaṅkara* and *Arirāja-niḥśaṅka-śaṅkara*. Like Vijaya, Vallāla also bore the title *parama-māheśvara*. The title of the next king Lakṣmaṇasena was *Arirāja-madana-śaṅkara*. In the inscriptions this king is sometimes called *parama-vaiṣṇava*, and sometimes again, *parama-nārasiṁha*.

The title, *parama-nārasiṁha,* is highly significant, for it shows the king as a worshipper of Viṣṇu in his Narasiṁha form.[16] So far as our knowledge goes, no other king ever adopted this title. In the *Madanapāḍā c. p. inscription* of king Viśvarūpasena, son of Lakṣmaṇasena, the latter has been wrongly called *parama-saura.* However, from a study of the epigraphic records, issued by Lakṣmaṇasena, it is clear that he was both a *parama-vaiṣṇava* and *parama-nārasiṁha.* His inscriptions, unlike his predecessors, begin with an invocation to god Nārāyaṇa.

Inscriptions of Lakṣmaṇasena begin with an adoration to lord Nārāyaṇa. in some of them the title, *parama-vaiṣṇava,* and in others *parama-nārasiṁha,* too, are attributed to the king. In addition to this the traditional royal seal of the Senas, bearing the figure of Sadāśiva in relief, was affixed to the copper plate grants, issued by this king. The *Edilpur grant* of Keśavasena as well as the *Madhyapāḍā* and *Madanapāḍā grants* of Viśvarūpasena, sons of Lakṣmaṇasena, credit the king for establishing sacrificial pillars at three corners of India, viz. at Benaras, Triveṇī (not to be identified with Allahabad in the U. P., as done by most scholars,[17] but with the one near Bandel-Saptagrām[17a] region in West Bengal, for location of two sacrificial pillars in the same direction will be meaningless) and the third at Puri in Orissa. These three pillars perhaps symbolically stood for the regions over which the king held his sway.

Various incarnations of lord Viṣṇu, of which mention may be made of Vāmana, Rāma (-Dāśarathī), Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were popular in the Sena period. Probably all the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu were popular at that time. It is interesting to note that the *Mādhāinagar* and *Bhowāl copper plate grants*[18] of Lakṣmaṇa compare the king with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and his parents with Devakī and Vasudeva. Inclusion of Buddha in the list of the ten incarnations (cf. the *Daśāvatāra stotra* of Jayadeva) is a significant religious feature of this

period. It may be pointed out here that the process of systematization of the list of *avatāras* began from a much earlier period; and Kṣemendra, the Kāshmirian poet who flourished in the 11th century A. D., also included Buddha in the list of the stereotyped ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.

King Lakṣmaṇasena was a great patron of Sanskrit learning, and there was a grand revival of it in his time. Like king Vikramāditya of Ujjain he had a galaxy of renowned scholars and poets, who adorned his court. It is said that the great Sanātana Gosvāmī found an inscription (in versified form) above the entrance of the *sabhā-hall* of Lakṣmaṇasena at Navadvīpa which mentioned all the 'five jewels' (*pañca-ratna*) of the court. The verse is quoted below:—

> '*Govardhanaśca Śaraṇo Jayadeva*
> *Umāpatiḥ* /
> *Kavirājaśca ratnāni samitau*
> *Lakṣmaṇasya ca* //'

Verse No. 4 of the *Gītagovinda* gives the name of Jayadeva along with other poets like Umāpatidhara, Śaraṇa, Govardhana and Dhoyī. According to king Kumbha of Medapāṭ, the commentator of the *Gītagovinda*, the aforesaid verse in fact refers to the *six* poets, for Śrutidhara was not a title of Dhoyī but the name of another poet.[19] All these court-poets were of extra-ordinary erudition. They were not only adept in composing poems on secular topics, but also on Vaiṣṇavite themes, specially the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends. The Sena king Lakṣmaṇa not only patronised the Sanskrit learning, but he also composed some beautiful and elegant verses on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa topic in Sanskrit. Some of them have found place in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* (II. 61. 5, 80. 1, 82. 3-4, 105. 3 and 157. 2). Though apparently erotic by nature, they describe the divine sports of Rādha and Kṛṣṇa. Verse II 61. 5 of the *Sadukti°* refers to the river Kālindī (Yamunā), which has gone down in the *purāṇas* and Vaiṣṇava literature as being associated with the love-dalliances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The incident

recorded in this verse is also mentioned in various Sanskrit works including the *Veṇīsaṁhāra* of Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa.

While four other 'jewels' of the court of Lakṣmaṇasena will be discussed in *Section C*, an appreciation of the literary attainments of the most celebrated 'jewel', Jayadeva, and other associated problems relating to the home and religious belief of the poet will be made in a separate chapter. The anthological work, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* will also be dealt in *Section C.*

The epigraphic records of kings Viśvarūpasena and his brother Keśavasena show that unlike their father, Lakṣmaṇasena, they were devoted to Sūrya. Though, Dr. Sircar[20] has questioned the existence of a Sena king having the name as Keśava, it is generally believed that Viśvarūpa was the elder brother of Keśava and both issued copper-plate grants (one to the credit of Keśava and two to that of Viśvarūpa). The *Edilpur grant*[21] of Keśava contains almost the same verses as those in the *Madanapāḍā* and *Madhyapāḍā* (*or Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat grant*,[22] issued by Viśvarūpa. The difference in *birudas* of these two brothers as well as some verses quoted in the *Sadukti°* under Keśavasena convincingly prove as to the existence of the latter. It is possible that Keśava succeeded to the Sena throne after Viśvarūpa, his elder brother. Both these princely brothers bore the epithet, *parama-saura.* Like their illustrious predecessors, these kings also followed the practice of affixing the royal grants with the *Sadāśiva mudrā* and beginning the grants with an adoration to god Nārāyaṇa. It is interesting to note that the *Madanapāḍā grant* attributed erroneously the epithet *parama-saura* to king Lakṣmaṇasena, who was evidently a *parama-vaiṣṇava.* The *birudas* of Viśvarūpa and Keśava were respectively *Arirāja-vṛṣabhaśaṅkara and Arirāja-asahya śaṅkara.*

The *Madhyapāḍā and Madanapāḍā grants* of king Viśvarūpasena are very important for our purpose as they incidentally refer to the existence of a tank (*kuṇḍa*) of Varāha (11.41-44)

(an incarnation of Viṣṇu)[23] and a hermitage (temple ?) or *āśrama* of Kandarpaśaṅkara, a form of Pradyumneśvara? (ll. 43-46).[24] From a study of lines *41 to 44* of the first grant it appears that the tank of Varāha, (apparently presupposing the existence of the temple of Varāha) was situated at Devahāra in the village of Rāmasiddhi-*pāṭaka*. In lines 43-46 of the second grant it is said that the *āśrama* (hermitage—a temple ?) of Kandarpaśaṅkara was situated in Padāti-śāpāmārka, a part of the village of Piñjokāṣṭhī. The name Kandarpa-śaṅkara is just a synonym of the *biruda Arirāja-madana-śaṅkara* of king Lakṣmaṇa (minus *Arirāja*), and Dr. Sircar says that Kandarpaśaṅkara was possibly a deity named after Lakṣmaṇasena. But, the deity in question may possibly stand for Pradyumneśvara (Kandarpa=Madana=Pradyumna and Śaṅkara=Īśvara)—a form of the syncretic icon of Hari-Hara, mentioned in the *Guṇaighar* and *Deopārā records*.

Evidences furnished by the *Madanapāḍā* and *Madhyapāḍā grants* would suggest that the *Varāyis* or *Vārujīvis*[25] (betel-growers) were devoted to god Viṣṇu. The *Pāikpāḍā-Betkā Vāsudeva image inscription*[26] of the time of Govindacandra also testifies to this fact. The *Madhyapāḍā grant* also furnishes another interesting feature that lands were granted on the sacred or holy occasion of the *Utthāna dvādaśī* (ll. 57-58). It may be pointed out here that the *Utthānadvādaśī* in the month of *Kārttika* is an important festival of the Vaiṣṇavas.

A noteworthy incident of the Sena period is the development of 'the cult of Rādhā'—upon which the superstructure of neo-Vaiṣṇavism stands. This cult gained a regular force and vigour during the Sena rule in Bengal. Other aspects of the Brāhmanical religion were also not wanting. In fact, all principal gods and goddesses of the Brāhmanical pantheon were worshipped. So far as the image of deities are concerned, it may be observed that all of them were not meant for the purpose of worship (*arcā*), some of them were

actually used as ornamentation of temples. Numerous beautiful Viṣṇuite images, belonging to the Sena epoch or even earlier, have been unearthed from Bengal and her neighbourhood. A study of the Viṣṇuite images as found in Bengal will be made in *Appendix B* to this thesis.

SECTION B

Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Sena Period:

It has been already shown that the spread as well as popularity of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal in the medieval times was mainly due to the good offices of Vaiṣṇavite Varmans and Lakṣmaṇasena. There are evidences to show that the royal princes of some other minor dynasties and chieftains also worked for the furtherance of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal and her neighbourhood.

A brief resumé of the political history of Bengal in the 12th century A. D. would show that during the last decade of this century the kingdom of the Senas was passing through a crisis. The progress of Muhammedan arms from Bihar to Bengal and internal chaos aggravated it. The old and infirm king Lakṣmaṇasena could not afford any protection to the people in the face of these fanatical invaders. Indeed, the kingdom of the Senas was almost in a tottering condition. The officials and the feudatories took part in the domestic intrigues; and some of them were fortunate enough to carve out principalities of their own. The *Mahāsāmantādhipati Śrīmad*-Ḍommanapāla was one of these few fortunate feudatories. The *Sunderaban copper plate inscription*[27] of this *Mahāsāmantādhipati*, dated in Śaka 1118 (equivalent to 1196 A. D.), bears testimony to the above statement. It is interesting to note that the reverse side of the copper plate in question bears in beautiful outline the figure of the god Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu in his Nṛsiṁha form, seated in *lalitāsana* on a wheeled chariot, while his mount Garuḍa is shown in front of him. It has been suggested by some that this great chieftain paid

homage to the *vìgraha* of Nārāyaṇa. The god Nārāyaṇa, shown in outline on the back of the said copper-plate, might also indicate Lakṣmaṇasena, the *kṣmāpāla Nārāyaṇa*, who was presumably the overlord of *Mahāsāmantādhipati* Śrī Ḍommanapāla (as suggested by some scholars).[28] Methinks, it will be improper to subscribe to such a farfetched suggestion. However, I would like to refrain from commenting on this point. From a study of the *Sunderban grant* of *Śrīmad* Ḍommanapāla, we come to learn that though he was a *parama māheśvara*, his religious belief did not stand in the way of his paying homage to god Nārāyaṇa. This attitude of Ḍommanapāla was perfectly in keeping with the spirit of toleration of the age. It is highly probable that he was a *Smārta*.

The next inscription, important for our purpose, comes from Keoār, near Rāmpal, in the district of Dacca. The *Keoār Viṣṇu image inscription*[29] does not bear either the date or the name of the king, during whose reign the image was installed. Palaeographically, however, the inscription may belong to the 13th century A. D. The inscription, incised on the pedestal, records that a certain Vaṅgoka of Varendrī (of Jaṭaka *Jāṁi*) installed the image with a view to residing in the heaven of Viṣṇu (cf. *Viṣṇor-Viṣṇu-sālokyakāmyayā*, 1. 2). It is interesting to note that the ardent belief of the devout Vaiṣṇavas was to have some room in the heaven of Viṣṇu, Goloka or Vaikuṇṭha.

That Bengal was an ardent supporter of the cult of Viṣṇu in the Sēna period and afterwards, is convincingly proved by the existence of a Vaiṣṇava temple in the Triveṇī-Saptagrāma region.[30] Though, the said temple was converted into a mosque by the great Gazi Zāffar Khān in 1298 A. D. and a mausoleum was built in the temple-area in subsequent times, there are evidences to show that there stood originally a beautiful and elegant stone temple of Viṣṇu in that place. The architectural pattern of the mausoleum in question consists of a

double chamber, probably representing the chief characteristics of the original Vaiṣṇava temple, which consisted of a rectangular enclosure having two roof-less compartments in black basalt with a vestibule (*āntarāla*) and a pavilion (*maṇḍapa*). The vestibule in question still stands intact. According to Percy Brown, the aforesaid temple was possibly a lofty one with tiers of ornate character and trefoil arches, and was surmounted by a *śikhara* (over the inner-chamber)[31]

There are definite proofs that the above-mentioned temple was dedicated to Viṣṇu. For instance, we may refer to the 'descriptive labels', found at the converted temple. These 'descriptive labels', written in the proto-Bengali characters of the 12th-13th centuries A.D., depict the Vaiṣṇavite scenes from the two great epics and the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, such as (a) the banishment of Sītā, (b) the coronation (of Rāma), (c) killing of Rāvaṇa by Śrī-Rāma, (d) killing of Khara and Triśira, (e) fight between Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Duḥśāsana, (f) killing of Cāṇūra (by Kṛṣṇa), (g) stealing away the robes (of the *gopīs* by Kṛṣṇa), (h) fight between Śrī-Kṛṣṇa and Bāṇāsura and (i) killing of Kaṁsa (by Kṛṣṇa)[32]. Probably, these labels were once fixed under the panels depicting such scenes for the convenience of the general public. In addition to these panels, there were also images of the various incarnations of Viṣṇu. specially of Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, as also of Lakṣmī or Sītā, adorning the basement or the niches of the temple.[33] An image of Viṣṇu (Balarāma) with a mace in his hand can still be seen through a hole at the back of an enclosure of the present mausoleum. The 'descriptive labels' of the aforesaid temple reminds one of similar panels, connected with the 'Kṛṣṇa saga', at Pāhāḍpur of an earlier period. It shows that Bengal had not foregotten the tradition of plastic art, which culminated in carving the popular *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* scenes, Bengal lived upto this tradition till the late nineteenth century A.D., when scenes from the epics, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as well as from various other *purāṇas* and *tantras*, carved in terra-cotta panels of the brick temple of the period.

Like Zāffar Khān Gāzi's Dargāh, the great Ādinā mosque, near Hazrat Pāṇḍuā, also was built out of the spoliated materials of a Vaiṣṇava temple of the Sena period. A close examination of the small subsidiary doorways on the west and back wall of the Ādinā mosque along with the pilasters, cornices, floral friezes and carved fragments etc. supports this. It is, thus, clear that there flourished a typical 'school of architecture' in eastern India, specially in Bengal, during the Sena period. This type has been designated by Percy Brown at 'the lost temple type of pre-Islamic Bengal'. Very few remains of this 'lost architectural style' are now extant[31]. The original Vaiṣṇava temple at Tribeni might have been built by Lakṣmaṇasena, or his vassal (?) Bhūdeva, who was killed by Zāffar Ghāzi? while preaching Islam in this region[35]. Though, Vaiṣṇavism suffered a setback at the hands of the followers of Islam for a period of two centuries or more, the activities of the Vaiṣṇava merchants of Saptagrāma revitalised it in the 16th century A.D. They helped Nityānanda, the great apostle of *Gauḍiya* Vaiṣṇavism, immensely to preach Vaiṣṇava ideals in this region[36]. The abode of Uddhāraṇa Datta, a great name in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, was situated here. The *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, fully testifies to this fact.[36a]

It has already been shown that towards the end of the 12th century A.D. Bengal was passing through a political crisis. The feudatories of that period took opportunity of the weakness of the central power and carved out principalities of their own. Ḍommanapāla and possibly Bhūdhara also, were among those few opportunists. After the fall of the city of Nuddeah to the followers of Islam, the capital of the Senas was transferred to Vikrampur in East Bengal. But, there too, the position of the Sena princes was not secure. After the rule of Keśavasena, or possibly after Madhusena, the Senas had to give way to the rising power of the Devas.

There were as many as four illustrious kings in the Deva dynasty, viz. Puruṣottama (-Deva ?), Madhumathana Deva

(Madhusūdana Deva, according to the *Chittagong plate*), Vāsu Deva and Dāmodara Deva. So far three copper plate grants, issued by the Devas, have been found. They are *Mehār*[37], *Chittagong*[38] and *Ādābāḍi*[39] *copper plates*. The *Mehār grant* describes Puruṣottama as the chief of the Devas, though it does not ascribe any royal title to him. Dr. R. C. Majumdar thinks that Madhumathana Deva was the real builder of the Deva kingdom[40]. Like the Varmans and Lakṣmanasena, the Devas also were adherents of the Vaiṣṇava faith. The official seal of the Devas contained the figure of Viṣṇu riding on Garuḍa, and it is found affixed to their copper-plates. Prof. D. P. Ghosh[41] interprets the seal-device in question as representing the picture of 'a fallen foe about to be killed'. But the editors of the *Mehār c. p. grant*, Drs. B. M. Barua and P. B. Chakraverty[41a] are of opinion that the seal really depicted the scene of a duel between Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa) and Cāṇūra, the wrestler of Kaṁsa. The seal of the *Chittāgong c. p. grant*, however, definitely represented Viṣṇu on Garuḍa. The *Mehār grant* also appears to have the same seal device, for the upper figure in it shows a two-armed Viṣṇu, while the lower one is undoubtedly Garuḍa with his long beak-like nose and other features. The representation of Viṣṇu in his Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa form on the royal seal and the Vaiṣṇavite name of king Dāmodara Deva as well as of his predecessors sufficiently indicate that the Devas were adherents of the Vaiṣṇava faith. The observations made by late N. G. Majumdar[42] in this connection are also to be noted. While the *Mehār copper plate grant* begins with an invocation to Puruṣottama, the *Chittagong copper plate grant* with that to Dāmodara. Both Puruṣottama and Dāmodara are but different names of Viṣṇu.

The Vaiṣṇavite leanings of kings Dāmodara and his son Daśaratha are indicated also by their adoption of the *birudas*, *Arirāja-Cānūra-Mādhava and Arirāja-Danuja-Mādhava* respectively. It may be pointed out here that the Sena kings had also *birudas*, beginning with *Arirāja*. The royal seal affixed to the plate contains a representation of lord Nārāyaṇa with

his usual attributes in the four hands. The *Ādābāḍī copper plate*, issued by king Daśaratha, records that he obtained the kingdom of Gauḍa through the grace of god Nārāyaṇa. This king was better known as 'Danuja-Mādhava'. According to late Dr. N. K. Bhattasali[43], king Daśaratha Deva, who bore the title of *Dānūja-Mādhava*, was identical with the famous Danuj Rāi of Sonargaon in East Bengal, who helped Sultān Ghiyās-ud-dīn Balban by obstructing the way of the fleeing rebel Tughril Khān through the riverways sometime in 1280 A.D. From the *Deva Vaṁśer Itivṛtta*[44], it appears that East Bengal was lost to the Devas towards the end of the 13th century A.D. and they (Devas) had to retire to South Bengal. The *Vaiṣṇava-toṣanī-ṭīkā*[45] of Sanātana Gosvāmī also observes that the kingdom of Danuja-marddana included Choṭo Pāṇḍuā in the district of Hooghly. It will be necessary now to refer to three records found in the outlying provinces of Bengal. Of these two, belonging to the 13th century A.D., come from the Bhāṭera region of the district of Sylhet; and the remaining one from Uṁgā in the district of Gayā in Bihar (15th cent. A.D.). From the socio-political point of view, it may be said that there was once a close connection between Bengal and Kāmarūpa on the one hand, and Magadha on the other, in the olden times.

Of the two *Bhāṭera plates*,[46] one was issued by Govinda-Keśava Deva and the other by Īśāṇa Deva. It is interesting to note that while the grant of Govinda-Keśava began with an invocation to Śiva, that of Īśāṇa with an obeisance to Nārāyaṇa and Ghanaśyāma-Kṛṣṇa. This indicates that Vaiṣṇavite names do not always indicate the Vaiṣṇavite belief also.[47] That was the reason why king Govinda-Keśava caused the erection of a temple in honour of Vaṭeśvara-Śiva, and king Īśāṇa erected a lofty temple, surmounted by *cakra*, in honour of Kamalākānta Nārāyaṇa. From a study of the aforesaid grants, it is clear that various legends connected with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, namely, 'the churning of the ocean, 'lifting of the Govardhana hill', 'killing of Kaṁsa', 'killing of Cedirāja

Śiśupāla,' as well as episodes from the life of Kṛṣṇa at Gokula were popular in the Bhaṭṭapāṭaka or Bhāṭpāḍā region (Bhāṭera) in the 13th century A.D.

The *Umgā stone inscription*,[48] found at the top of the Gaurīśaṅkar hill near Gayā town and issued by king Bhairabendra in *V.S. 1500*, i.e. 1443 A.D., is an important religious record inasmuch as it lays down that the perpretator of even the most horrible sin may be expiated by erecting only a temple in honour of Hari (Viṣṇu) *verse* 6. It further shows that the temples of Viṣṇu may be built in places of (a) pilgrimage, (b) devotion and (c) hermitage (verse 7).

SECTION C

Court-poets of king Lakṣmaṇasena and the Saduktikarṇāmṛta:

A brief account of the literary attainments of each of the 'five jewels' (barring Jayadeva) of the court of Lakṣmaṇasena will be given in the following pages. It may be pointed out here that some verses composed by them have found place in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*.[49]

I. *Umāpatidhara*:[50]

He was a contemporary of the three successive kings of the Sena dynasty from Vijayasena onwards. He must have been a man of advanced age, when he adorned the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena. Besides the *Deopāṛā Praśasti* of this poet, we get about one hundred verses said to have been composed by him. It is very interesting to note that the same Umāpati, who composed the *Deopāṛā Praśasti* to sing the glories of king Vijaya, also composed some verses in order to eulogize king Lakṣmaṇa, his grandson (cf. verses I.72,4; III. 20.4 & 26.4; and V. 18.3, quoted in the *Skm.*)*. Though a Śaiva, Umāpati composed poems on the Matsya and Nṛsiṁha incarnations of Viṣṇu as well as on various aspects of the

* *Skm.* is an abbreviation for *Saduktikarṇāmṛta.*

Kṛṣṇalīlā. He dealt with the *Kṛṣṇa-kaumāram* (verses I. 52. 4, 55.3-*Skm.*), *Hari-Krīḍā* (I. 55.4), *Venunādaḥ* (I. 57.3), *Kṛṣṇa-Rukmiṇī* (I. 61.1; with a slight variation I. 53 and 5), *Kṛṣṇa-Lakṣmī* (I. 67.2). The Matsya and Nṛsiṁha (*Śṛṅgārī*) *avatāras* are mentioned respectively in 37.2 & I. 42. 5 of the *Skm.*

II. *Śaraṇa* :[51]

Śaraṇa was a court-poet of Lakṣmaṇasena. Some 15 verses have been quoted in the *Skm.* under his name. In one such verse (III. 54.5) he referred to a Sena ruler, who in all probability was no other than Lakṣmaṇa. He was most probably identical with Śaraṇadeva, Śaraṇadatta and Cirantana-Śaraṇa, whose verses have been quoted in the *Skm.* In verses I. 61.3 and V. 11.4 he has dealt with the love-dalliances of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* of Vrajabhūmi. Cirantana-Śaraṇa has composed a verse eulogizing the Kūrma incarnation of Viṣṇu (cf. verse IV. 1.2 in the *Skm.*). No complete work of this poet has yet been found.

III. *Dhoyī*[52]

'Kavirāja' Dhoyī or Dhoyika was a famous poet, who composed the *Pavanadūtam* to eulogize his patron, Lakṣmaṇasena. Śrutidhara was probably his another title. From a study of verse 103 of the *Pavanadūtam,*[53] we come to learn that the poet (Dhoyī) was a Vaiṣṇava by faith (cf. *bhaktir-Lakṣmī-pati-caraṇayorastu janmāntare' pi*). Some stray verses of this poet have also found place in the *Skm.*, one of which was devoted to the Vāmana-Trivikrama incarnation of Viṣṇu (verse III. 49.3 of the *Skm.*). The *Pavanadūtam* of Dhoyī bears clear evidence to show that the 'Raghukulaguru,' i.e. Rāma-Dāśarathī (one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu) was worshipped on the banks of the Svar-ṇadī, i.e., the Bhāgīrathī. It indicates that the worship of Rāma-Dāśarathī was in vogue in West Bengal. In verse 87 of this work the Viśvarūpa form of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Kaiṭabha, has been hinted at.

The fact that Kṛṣṇa was '*bahu-ballabha*', has also been referred to in the same verse. Verse 28 of the same work is very significant, for it says that goddess Lakṣmī came down to earth as if to make romance with Murāri, a name of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. Significant is also the mention of *devadāsīs* (or, temple-dancers), assigned to the temples. It may be pointed out in this connection that the *devadāsīs* or *vārarāmās* have been mentioned in the *Rāmacaritam*[54] of Sandhyākaranandin, the *Deopāṛā inscription* of Vijayasena as also in some other literary and epigraphic records. In the concluding verses of the *Pavanadūtam* the poet records his firm faith in the feet of Kṛṣṇa, and cherishes a fervent desire that his work may endure the test of time. Reference has been made (*in verse* 103) to the love-dalliances of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā and the other *gopīs*. This as well as verse 28 shows that Rādhā was identified with Lakṣmī in the Sena period.

IV. *Ācārya Govardhana*[55]

Ācārya Govardhana was an important luminary in the court of Lakṣmaṇasena. In verse 35 of his *Āryā Saptaśatī* the great *Ācārya* acknowledges a Sena king (evidently Lakṣmaṇa) as his patron. Not only that, like Umāpatidhara this eminent poet was also a contemporary of both the grandfather and father of king Lakṣmaṇa. It is said that Govardhana belonged to Orissa, but at the present state of our knowledge this cannot be vouchsafed with certainty. According to Jayadeva, this erudite poet was adept in composing erotic verses. The *Āryā Saptaśatī*, composed in the model of the *Gāthā-Saptaśatī* of Hāla in Prākṛt, begins with an invocation to both Śiva and Viṣṇu. But, it should be borne in mind that verse 702 of the work shows the adherence of the poet to the Vaiṣṇava faith (dedication of his work to the feet of Hari-Viṣṇu is hinted at here). Not only that, he composed many verses to sing the glory of god Viṣṇu as well as his consorts and incarnatory forms. His verses on the amours of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī as well as of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*,

including Rādhā, no doubt paint him as a skilful composer of erotic poems (verses 10-14, 24-25, 62, 232 and 617; 158, 341). The incarnations of Viṣṇu mentioned in the *Āryā Saptaśatī* are: (a) Hayamūrdha (Hayaśīrṣa), (verses 15-17 & 587), (b) Mahā-Varāha (verses 16-17 and 601), (c) Trivikrama-Vāmana of *Daśāvatāravid-Viṣṇu* (verses 70, 115 and 601), (d) Kūrma or Kamaṭha (verses 120, 167, 193 and 598) & (e) Haladhara-Balarāma (verse 344 and also possibly verse 300). Both Ananta and Anantaśāyin-Viṣṇu have been mentioned in verses 17 and 617, respectively. The following epithets of Viṣṇu were also known to the poet, viz. Puṇḍarīka-Nārāyaṇa, Muradviṭ, Padmanābha, Janārdana, Hari, Keśava etc. Some of the secular verses, composed by Govardhana, have been 'vaiṣṇavised' by Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Padyāvalī*. Govardhana also composed verses relating to the life of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja (*vs. 64, 207, 304, 341, 398, 571 & 624*). In the *Saduktikarṇāmṛtam* some stray verses of Govardhana have found place.

It may be of some interest to discuss here the works of two other great scholars of the Sena period. They are Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa and Halāyudha Bhaṭṭa.

V. *Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa*[56]

Aniruddha, the great Campāhaṭṭīya Vārendra, was famous for his scholarship in Bengal and her surroundings. He was the preceptor of king Vallāla. Though Aniruddha was a *Smārta*, he wrote on Vaiṣṇava theology. The *Bhāgavat-tattva-mañjarī*, a work on Vaiṣṇava theology, was said to have been composed by him. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, the famous author of works or compendia like the *Satkriyāsāra-dīpikā* (ritual work of the Vaiṣṇavas) and *Haribhaktivilāsa*, has acknowledged his indebtedness to scholars like Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa and Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa. Had Aniruddha not been a Vaiṣṇava, a devout Vaiṣṇava like Gopāla Bhaṭṭa could not have consulted his work.

VI. *Halāyudha Bhaṭṭa:*[57]

Halāyudha probably flourished under Lakṣmaṇasena. This Halāyudha was an *Āvasathika*, who held successively the posts of *Rājapaṇḍita*, *Mahāmātya* and *Mahādharmādhikāra* or *°dhyāsa*. Halāyudha is best known for his *Brāhmaṇasarvvasvam*. Besides this (work), four more works are credited to him. They are: (a) *Vaiṣṇavasarvvasvam*, (b) *Śaivasarvvasvam*, (c) *Paṇḍita-sarvvasvam* and (d) *Mīmāṁsāsarvvasvam*. But, no manuscripts of the first three works have yet been found. Halāyudha was probably a *Smārta*, for he wrote manuals for both the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects. In the *Mīmāṁsā-sarvvasvam*, the following sects have been mentioned, viz. *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Pañcarātra* (a form of Vaiṣṇavism), *Pāśupata* (a form of Śaivism), *Śākya* (Buddhism) and *Nirgrantha* (Jainism).

The great writer on religious treatises on *Smṛti*, Raghunandana Bhattacharya has quoted in his *Aṣṭāviṁśatitattva*[58] and other supplementary *paddhatis*, verses from Vaiṣṇavite works as well as other works known in his time. It will not be possible here to single out either their names or the names of their authors. However, of the 28 *tattvas* the following are important for our purpose, viz. (a) *Janmāṣṭamī-tattva*, (b) *Ekādaśī-tattva*, (c) *Vrata-tattva*, (d) *Deva-pratiṣṭhā-tattva* and (e) *Puruṣottama-tattva*. The *Rāsa-yātrā-paddhati* is also an important work of Raghunandana. In the *Aṣṭāviṁśatitattva* this great scholar has quoted verses from the *Govindamānasollāsa*, *Bhāgavata-ṭīkā*, *Vaiṣṇavāmṛta* and *Śāradā-tilaka*, extant in his time.

The Saduktikarṇāmṛtam:

The *Saduktikarṇāmṛtam* of Śrīdhara-dāsa, a famous Sanskrit anthological work, was composed in *Śaka* 1127, corresponding to the 27th regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena (according to some scholars to his 37th regnal year). From a study of the *prastāvanā* verses of the *Skm.* it is clear that Śrīdharadāsa belonged to an orthodox Vaiṣṇava family.[59]

His father Vaṭudāsa, a close friend as well as a high official of Lakṣmaṇa, was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu in his Ādivarāha form. Śrīdhara himself was a Vaiṣṇava, and showed his predilections for *Kṛṣṇa*, the most perfect incarnation of Viṣṇu. These verses show that he was devoted to Śrīpati-Hari (Viṣṇu) of the inscrutable form, who bestowed wisdom and wealth, brought well-being to his worshippers and removed all kinds of darkness. It was thus but natural for him to collate verses mostly Vaiṣṇavite in nature. But, like the *Smārtas* of the medieval times, he did not confine himself only to verses eulogizing Viṣṇu or his incarnations. Moreover, he had to cater to the needs of the general public, belonging to various religious sects. In *Section I*, i. e. the *Deva-Pravāha*, there are verses on the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, various exploits of Kṛṣṇa, achievements of Nārāyaṇa etc. Both Vāmana and Trivikrama have also been eulogized in this work. Of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa hase been eulogized here in more than sixty verses. This indicates that the Kṛṣṇa saga was very much popular in Bengal in the medieval times. The Kṛṣṇaite verses generally end here with the refrain—*Hariḥ pātu vaḥ*. Verses composed on Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Dāśarathī-Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalkī have also found place in this anthology. As the love-romance of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, specially Rādhā, was a very popular theme to the poets in the medieval age, a number of such verses have been quoted in this anthological work. Its influence was immense upon the *Vaiṣṇava padas* or Vaiṣṇava anthological works of a slightly later period. This is most discernible in the *Padyāvalī* of Rūpa Gosvāmī, where the great Vaiṣṇava scholar has freely re-quoted some verses of the *Skm.*, sometimes in toto and at other times with slight variations. Thus, some non-sectarian verses of the *Skm.* have been slightly altered by Rūpa to suit his purpose. Dr. S. K. De[60] has noticed not only *vaiṣṇavisation* of the 'non-vaiṣṇavite' verses, but 'Kṛṣṇaisation' of some 'vaiṣṇavite' verses also. Some of the verses quoted in the *Skm.* seem to have presupposed the

existence of the mental attitude of 'śuddha bhakti,' emphasised by Caitanyadeva (cf. *Yāni tvaccaritāni rasanābhyām dhyāntamanām .....dhārā-vāhitāya bahantu tānyeva tānyeva me//*). A verse of poet Vāsava, again, may be compared with the *Vaiṣṇava padas* on *dautyabhāva* or *sakhī-bhāva*.[61] It is still more interesting to note that some verses of Kulaśekhara on devotion to Hari possibly preconceived the advent of Caitanya and his emotionalism. They read like sectarian poems written in the post-Caitanya period. Indeed, they are like transitional verses, apt to be quoted in any work dealing with devotional poems or in any other sectarian work.

In fine, it will be necessary to say a few words about the possible provenance of the authors, whose verses have found place in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛtam*. The compiler of this work did not confine himself in collecting verses composed by Bengali poets only from the earliest times down to his days. Indeed, he has quoted verses of a good many non-Bengali poets also. He has selected materials freely from both old and new, known and unknown sources. It is difficult to single out names of the poets from this work, who actually belonged to Bengal. But some scholars have tried to show that the names ending with suffixes like 'ok', viz. Gaṅgok, Gosok etc., and titles like Gupta, Rakṣita, Nandī, Bhaṭṭaśālī, Dāsa, Vandyaghaṭīya etc., were no doubt Bengali names.[62]

REFERENCES:

Chapter III

1 For *Barrackpur c.p.*, see *E. I.*, vol. 15, p. 278 ff. *Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 57 ff.

2 M. Chakravorty, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 2, no. 5, N. S., p. 157.

3 J. N. Banerjea, *Devl. of Hindu Iconography*, 2nd edn., pp. 544, 546.

4 See, Haridasa Mitra's article on 'Sadāśiva Worship in Bengal' in *J.R.A.S.B.*, N. S., vol. 29, 1933, pp. 171-254.

5 *Deopāṛa ins.*, v. 5 ; *Mādhāinagar grt.*, l. 31.

6 *Mādhāinagar grt.*, v. 4.

7 Dr. B. C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of the Inss. of Bengal*, 1942, pp. 455-56.

8 A detailed discussion about the home of Jayadeva will be made in the next chapter.

9 *Vallāla-carita*, ed. by H. P. Sastri (*Bib. Ind.*).

10 Kielhorn, *E. I.*, vol. 1, p. 305 ff. ; N. G. Majumdar, *Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 42 ff.

11 N. G. Majumdar, *ibid* ; Dr. V. S. Pathak, *J.A.S.*, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 67.

11A Reference may be made here to a ruined temple of Pradyumneśvara of about 900 yrs. old in Cakdah P. S. as noticed by MM. H. P. Sastri—quoted in the *Vaṅger Jātīya Itihāsa* vol. 1, p. 144 by N. N. Vasu.

12 P. C. Bagchi, *Dacca History of Bengal*, vol. 1, p. 400. At page 402, however, this scholar opined that Pradyumna had nothing to do with the third *vyūha*.

12A It may be mentioned in this connection that the *Naihāṭi c. p.* of Vallālasena begins with an invocation to Śiva and Pārvatī in the composite Ardhanārīśvara form.

13 *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, ed. by Rāmāvatāra Śarmā and Haradatta Śarmā, Lahore, 1933 ; S. K. Chatterji, *Viśvabhāratī Patrikā*, 1350 B. S., Srāvaṇa, p. 23 ff.

14 *Arch. Surv. of India. An. Rep.*, 1921-22, pp. 78-79 ; *Inss. of* Bengal (3), p. 168.

15 *Bīrbhūm Vivaraṇa* (in Beng.), vol. 2, p. 10.

16 Cf. the *Govindapur*. *Mādhāinagar* and *Sunderban grants* of Lakṣmaṇa. Similarly, it may be shown that in the *Madanapāḍā grt.* of Viśvarūpasena, king Lakṣmanasena has been wrongly called

a *parama saura.* Randle has read *vaiṣṇava* in place of *saura, Bhowal. c. p.*

17 *Edilpur grt.* — N. N. Vasu, *J.A.S.B.*, 1896, Pt. 1, p. 6 ff ; R. D. Banerji, *J.A.S.B.*, N. S., vol. 10, p. 97 ff ; Prinsep, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 7, p. 43 ff ; *Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 118 ff ; D. C. Sircar, *J.A.S.* (L), vol. 20, 1954, p. 209 ff ; *Madanpāḍā grt.*—N. N. Vasu *ibid ; Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 132 ff. ; Sircar, *ibid ; Madhyapāḍā* (*Sāhitya Pariṣat*) *grt.*—H. P. Sastri, *I.H.Q.*, vol. 2, 1928, p. 77 ff ; *Inss of Bengal* (3), p. 140-170 ff ; Sircar, *J.A.S.*, (L), vol. 20, 1954, p. 201 ff.

18 *Mādhāinagar grt.*—*J.A.S.B.*, N. S., vol. 5, 1909, p. 467 ff. *Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 106. ; *Bhowal grt*—Wilson, *Proc. A.S.B.*, May, 1829 ; *I.H.Q.*, vol. 3, p. 89 ff ; *I.H.Q.*, vol. 15, p. 300 ff.; *E. I.*, vol. 26, pp. 1-13 ; *J.R.A.S.B.* (L), vol. 8, 1942, pp. 1-39.

19 The aforesaid traditional verse speaks of 'five gems' of his court, viz. Govardhana, Śaraṇa, Jayadeva, Umāpati and Kavirāja. This is confirmed by Kumbha (14th century A. D.) in his *Rasika-priyā-ṭīkā* (on *Gīta-govinda*, I. 4), but he (the commentator) mentions six, adding Dhoyī and substituting Śrutidhara for Kavirāja. Kumbha is inclined to find a reference to a scholar named Śrutidhara, but most scholiasts agree that it is an epithet of Dhoyī.

20 Sircar, *J.A.S.*, vol. 20, 1954, p. 211.

21 See, *ante.*

22 See, *ante.*

23 Sircar, *J.A.S.*, vol. 20, 1954, p. 202 ff., 11. 41-44 (*varāha kuṇḍa* and *Devakūra-devabhoga*) of *Madhyapāḍā grant.*

24 Sircar ; *ibid*, p. 215, 11. 43-46 (*Kandarpaśaṅkar-āśramīya* of *Madanapāḍā grant.*

25 Sircar, *ibid.*

26 For *Pāikpāḍā inscription*, see ref. to sec, *Chap. II.*

27 Ed. Dr. B. C. Sen and Prof. D. P. Ghosh, *Ind. Cult.*, vol. 1, pp. 679-82 and *I.H.Q.*, vol. 10, pp. 324-27, f n. 11-13 ; *I.C.*, vol. 2, p. 139.

28 *Ibid.*

29 N. K. Bhattasali, *E.I.*, vol. 17, p. 355 ; also see, Bhattasali's *Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, 1929, p. 85.

30 Money, *J.R.A.S.*, vol. 16, 1947, Pt. I, p. 393 ff. ; R. D. Banerji, *J.R.A.S.B.*, N. S. vol. 5, pp. 245-47, and *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā*, 1315 B. S., pp. 21 ; 358 and 1316 B. S., p. 189 ff.

31 Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture*, vol. I (new edn.), pp. 152-53.

32 Money, *op. cit.* ; R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.* ; Benoy Ghosh, *Paścim Vaṅger Saṁskriti* (in Bengali), p. 131.

33 Money, *op. cit.*, R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*

34 P. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

35 For the tradition, see, Sudhir Sarkar's *Hughlīr Itihāsa* (in Bengal) and *Dist. Gazetteer—Hughli*, 1912, p. 304 ff.; *Dacca History of Bengal*, vol. 2, relevant portion.

36 *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Basumati edn., *Antyakhaṇḍa*, p. 309.

36A *Ibid.*

37 *Mehār c.p.* of Dāmodar Deva, reg. yr.4, dated in *Śaka* 1156 (1234 A. D.), *E. I.*, vol. 27, p. 182 ff:

38 *Chittagong c.p.* of Dāmodar Deva, dated in *Śaka* 1165 (1243 A. D.) *c.p. Ins. of Bengal* (3), 158 ff.; *J.A.S.B.*, vol 43, 1874, Pt. 1, pp. 318-24.

39 *Ādābāḍī c.p.* of Daśaratha Deva, reg. yr. 3, 1263 A. D. *Inss. of Bengal*(3), 181 ff. and *Bhāratvarṣa*, Pauṣ—1332 B. S., p. 78.

40 *Dacca History of Bengal*, vol. 1, p. 253.

41 D. P. Ghosh's view quoted in *E. I.*, vol. 27, p. 183.

41A *E. I.*, vol. 27, p. 182 ff.

42 See, *Inss. of Bengal* (3), p. 158 ff. and p. 181.

43 *Bhārātvarṣa*, Pauṣ—1332, p. 78 ff.; also see *Dacca Hist. of Bengal*, vol. 2, p. 65.

44 For *Deva Vaṁser Itivṛtta*, see S. C. Mitra's *Yaśohar-Khulnār Itihāsa* (1335), Pt. 1, pp. 296-97, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 18, 1922, pp. 413-14.

45 *J.A.S.*, vol. 18, 1952, p. 153.

46 *Bhāṭerā c.ps.*: No. 1 of 4151 or 4328 yr. of *Pāṇḍava era* (1049 A. D., acc. to K. M. Gupta; 1245 A. D., acc. to R. L. Mitra). For Gupta's view see, *E. I.*, vol. 19, p. 277 f. and for Mitra's observations, see, *Proc. A.S.B.*, 1880, p. 141 f. *No.* 2. of yr. 17 (1066—80 A. D., acc. to Gupta; 1262-75 A. D, acc. to Mitra). For Gupta's view, see *E.I.*, vol. 19, p. 280 and for Mitra's observations, see *Proc. A.S.B.* 1880, p. 152.

47 This was possibly due to the *Smārta* traditon.

48 P. Dayal, *J.R.A.S.B.*, 1906, p. 27, also see A. Banerji in *J.A.S.*, vol. IV. No. 2, 1962, p. 63.

49 *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, ed. by Rāmāvatāra Śarmā and Haradatta Śarmā, Lahore, 1933.

50 Aüfrecht, *Z.D M.G.*, vol. 40, p. 142 ff.; Pischel, *Die Hofdichter des Lakṣmaṇasena*, Goettingen, 1893, pp. 14-17; M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 2, no. 5, N. S., pp. 159-162.

51 Pischel, *ibid*, pp. 24-29; S. C. Chakraverty, *Intro. to Bhāṣā-*

vṛtti, p. 7 ; *Durghaṭa-vṛtti*, Trivandrum Skt. Series, no. 6, 1909 ; M. Chakraverty, *ibid*, pp. 173-74.

52 Pischel, *ibid*, p. 5 ff. 33-34 ; H. P. Sastri, *Notices* etc., 2nd series, I. Pt. 2, pp. 221-22 ; *Proc. A.S.B.*, July, 1893.

53 *Pavanadūtam*, ed. M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.* 1905, pp. 53-71 ; C. Chakraverty, (rev. ed.), Calcutta, 1926.

54 *Rāmacaritam*, ed. Dr. R. C. Majumdar and others ; *Beng. edn.* by Dr. R. G. Basak.

55 Ed. *Kāvyamālā*, Bombay 1886 (Rep. 1895) ; also ed. Somnāth Sarmā, Saṁvat 1921 (Beng. characters) ; M. Chakraverty *J.A.S.B.*, 1906, vol. 2, no. 5, N. S., pp. 162-53.

56 R. .L Mitra, *Notices etc.*, I. p. 191. ; H. P. Sastri, *Notices* etc., 3rd Series, I, p. 170 ; Aüfrecht, *Z.D.M.G.*, vol. 41, p. 329 ; *J.A.S.B.*, 1915, p. 363 ; B. Bhattacharya, *J.B.O.R.S.*, vol. 23, pp. 138-42, *Gauḍa Lekhamālā*, p. 147 ff ; *Bib. Ind.* Series, Calcutta, 1900 ; *S.P.S.*, no. 6, Calcutta ; M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.*, 1906, vol. 2, N. S. p. 158.

57 Mitra, *Notices etc.*, IV, p. 102 ; U. Misra. ; *J.B.O.R.S.*, vol. 17, 1931, pp. 227, 413 & vol. 18, 1932, p. 129 ; M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.*, 1915, pp. 327-338 ; Mitra, *Notices etc.*, VIII, p. 175 ; *Proc. A.S.B.*, 1869, p. 137.

58 Ed. Jīvānanda Vidyāsāgar in *Smṛtitattva*, vols. 1 and 2, Calcutta, 1895 ; Syāmācaraṇ Vidyābhūshan, Calcutta ; *J.A.S.B.*, 1915, vol. 11, no. 9, N. S., p. 363 ff.

59 *Srīmān Srīdharadāsa* .... /*Lakṣmīrvedavidāṁ* ... *Bhaktiḥ Srīpatipādapallava-nakhajyotsnāsu viśrāmyati* // — '*Prastāvaḥ*'—v. 3. Also see, v. 1 of *Maṅgalamanāratamanākhveysvarūpo Hariḥ* // v. 1.

60 See, Dr. S. K. De's edn. of *Padyāvalī*, 1934, Dacca, p. 197 ff.

It may be observed here that Rūpa Gosvāmī has shown his inclination towards the Bengal type of Vaiṣṇavism which takes the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

61 S. K. Chatterji, *Viśvabhāratī Patrikā*, *Srāvaṇa-Āśvina*, 1350 B. S., 1st Pt. pp. 33-35.

62 *Ibid* ; S. Sen, *Hist. of Bengali Lit.* (in Bengali), 1940, Pt. 1, pp. 28-29.

CHAPTER IV

JAYADEVA AND GĪTAGOVINDA

The topic of Jayadeva and *Gītagovinda*[1] is of such a great importance in the history of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal that it has been found necessary to devote one separate chapter to its consideration.

Jayadeva was the most important luminary of the galaxy of poets, who crowned the court of Lakṣmaṇasena. Though some stray verses of the poet have found place in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, it was the *Gītagovinda* which brought wide fame to him. Numerous scholars have tried to assess the literary merit of this work, but few have succeeded in deriving tangible results on the poet inspite of their critical acumen and sincerest efforts. It must be admitted that our knowledge regarding the home and parentage of Jayadeva is very imperfect and uncertain. Indeed, very little is known about the poet, and that, too, is mostly traditional and conflicting. That is the reason why the people of the three neighbouring states in eastern India, viz., Bengal, Orissa[2] and Mithilā,[3] claim him as their own. Beyond the similarity in name, nothing else can be found to support the Maithili tradition that Jayadeva was born in the town of Kenduli near Jenjharpur. On the authority of Candradatta'a *Bhaktamālā*[4] (a late work), the Oriya people would like to put him to Binduvilva village, near Purī in Orissa. But, the claim of Orissa to Jayadeva was ably refuted by M. M. Chakraverty.[5] His main grounds were that the tradition was not at all old and it was based on the Hindi *Bhaktamāl* of Nābhājīdāsa, edited and re-written by Nārāyaṇadāsa in the middle of the 17th century A. D., that it had jumbled together facts of different periods; and that it had confounded the *Gītagovindakāra* with another Jayadeva,[6] who flourished in the court of an Utkala king (cf. *Alaṅkāraśekhara*) and tagged to it the fact of an *Abhinava Gītagovinda*,

which was composed by the Utkala king Puruṣottama Gajapati of the last quarter of the 15th century A. D. But in recent years, a tendency has grown up among some Oriya scholars to prove that Jayadeva belonged to Orissa. For example, we may refer to the views expressed by Messrs. K. N. Mahapatra[7] and Siddhesvar Hota.[8] These two scholars have tried to show that Jayadeva was a native of Orissa, who belonged to the courts of Ekajaṭā Kāmadeva, Puruṣottama Deva and Anaṅga Bhīma Deva, the Gajapati kings of Utkala, as their royal poet; and that he was an inhabitant of Kendulipātnā (Kenduvilva) of Kenduli-śāsana (under P. S. Balipatna in the district of Purī in Orissa), which was situated near the confluence of rivers Prācī, Kuśabhadrā and Dhannā, a region rich in antiquities like sculptures and brick temples of the Bhaumakara period (circa 650 A. D.-850 A. D.).[9] They have cited some late or apocryphal works in Sanskrit and some vernacular languages as authorities to prove their contention that Jayadeva was an Oriya poet, but have at the same time discredited or belittled certain definite proofs in favour of the Bengali origin of the poet. They have also stressed on the fact that Caitanyadeva, though sang the poems of Jayadeva. did never visit or mention the village of Kenduli in West Bengal, the dwelling-place of the poet. But, non-mention of Kenduli in West Bengal on the part of Caitanya does not go to prove that the village of Kenduli (in West Bengal) was not the birth-place of Jayadeva. Similarly, the great Oriya statesman-cum-savant Rāya Rāmānanda did never mention Kendulipātnā in Kenduli-śāsana in Orissa as the birth-place of Jayadeva. Jayadeva belonged to West Bengal, and Kenduli on the river Ajay (in West Bengal) was his birth-place. Some reputed scholars like Lassen, Sir William Jones, Peterson and M. M. Chakraverty[10] have supported the claim of Bengal as the real provenance of Jayadeva.

Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* has earned an international reputation, so no wonder that various neighbouring states would try to claim him as their own. It is but natural that

the people of Orissa would claim Jayadeva as their own, who spent some best years of his life at Purī singing the glory of god Puruṣottama-Jagannātha with the accompaniment of dance. So, some ingenious inventions were made to connect him with Orissa. Village names are so common in different parts of India that they cannot serve as the only criterion to fix the provenance of reputed scholars or poets. *Verses XII. 11, I. 2, X. 8, III. 10* (having variant readings) of the *Gītagovinda* tend to show that Jayadeva's father was Bhojadeva, mother Rāmā and wife Padmāvatī,[11] and home was situated at Kenduvilva (variant readings Tendu,° Sindu,° Kindu° etc.) or Kenduli, district Birbhum, West Bengal, on the north bank of the river Ajay. Moreover, king Kumbhakarṇa of Medapāṭ (Mewāḍ), who flourished in the middle of the 15th century, has commented upon *verse I. 4.* of the above work by saying that there were six eminent poets, who adorned the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena (cf. *Rasika-priyā-ṭīkā* of Kumbhakarṇa).[11a] *Verse I. 4* itself speaks of the fellow-poets of Jayadeva like Umāpatidhara, Dhoyī and others, who adorned the court of Lakṣmaṇa. So, it is apparent that all of them were contemporaries. Jayadeva himself has eulogized his patron Lakṣmaṇa in more than one verse, though he forgot to mention his name. It is generally held that the Senas had their capital at Nadīyā city (identified with the present town of Navadwīp and its suburbs), which was stormed by the Muslim invaders towards the end of the 12th century A.D. But, it was not at all incorrect on the part of the author of the *Bīrbhum Vivaraṇa* to draw the attention of scholars to the traditional belief that the two of the famous six Bengal Vaiṣṇava Gosvāmīs, viz. Rūpa and Sanātana, actually saw the verse '*Govardhanaśca Śaraṇo Jayadeva Umāpatiḥ Kavirājaśca ratnāni samitau Lakṣmaṇasya ca//*' inscribed on the door of king Lakṣmaṇasena's assembly-hall in Navadvīpa.[12] The Muslim invasion of Nadīyā could not have destroyed all its buildings; and the particular assembly-hall in question might have been eroded by the changing courses of the

Bhāgīrathī sometime after Rūpa and Sanātana visited the same. It is not possible for a man to record everything he has seen, that is why we do not get any direct reference to this verse or to the association of Jayadeva with Lakṣmaṇasena in the works of Rūpa and Sanātana. That Kenduli (on the river Ajay, in West Bengal) was the birth-place of Jayadeva is difficult to refute inasmuch as the *Bhaktamālā* of Candradatta has also recorded a tradition that the river-goddess Gaṅgā appeared in her watery form to Jayadeva as he one day wished to bathe in the Ganges (i.e., the Bhāgīrathī, which, however, really stood for the Ajay, considered as very sacred due to its joining the Bhāgīrathī, some miles eastwards). Like Kenduli-pātnā in Orissa, Jayadev-Kenduli in West Bengal, too, contains two temples belonging to circa 15th century and 17th century respectively. Explorations in the Ajay valley in the Bīrbhum district have recently yielded potsherds and other antiquities of proto-historical times from Mandirā, now a deserted village, one mile to the south-east of Jayadev-Kenduli. Existence of two more brick temples (now in ruins) of *circa* 15th century A.D. has also been noticed in the same region. The present temple of Jayadeva at Kenduli, though built in the 17th century,[13] contains a door-jamb in the black basalt which probably formed a part of a stone temple of the Pāla-Sena times. This proves the existence of a stone temple in the Kenduli-Mandirā region in the Bīrbhum district, which was perhaps actually noticed by Jayadeva. Thus, the claim of Kenduli (in West Bengal) as the birth-place of Jayadeva is difficult to be refuted. The *Kāshmir MS.*[14] and the *Nepāl MS.*[15] (of the *Gītagovinda*), as well as the *Śekh-Śubhodayā*[16] (a work of the 16th century A.D.) show distinctly that Jayadeva belonged to the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena. The *Jayadeva-caritrī*[17] of Vanamālīdāsa also supports this. Thus, Jayadeva's association with the Sena king Lakṣmaṇasena and with Kenduli in the Bīrbhum district of West Bengal can hardly be ignored.

The *Gītagovinda* is a lyric drama with celestial songs in

praise of love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. From a study of the *Pṛithvīrājarāso* (in old Hindi) of poet Cāṅd Bardāi[18] (circa 13th century A.D.), it is clear that the 'Hymn to Govinda' as composed by poet Jayadeva was solely meant to be sung before Kṛṣṇa-Govinda, the god of his personal devotion. The *Gītagovinda* contains in all twelve cantos and twenty-four *Aṣṭapadīs*.[19] There are some recitative verses followed after songs—one to three verses, rhymed dance-songs and refrains. The work may be reviewed from four principal aspects. They are literary, devotional, musical and mystical. While, the middle portion of the work is full of expositions on the first three aspects, the beginning and the end of the same are full of mysticism. Jayadeva presents Rādhā in his work as symbolising the eternal love for Kṛṣṇa. Symbolically speaking, the whole story seems to represent the journey of the holy soul to Kṛṣṇa, the path of glory, which abounds in the everlasting peace and the desired salvation (*Gītagovinda*, XII. 29.). It is said that the celestial song of Jayadeva was meant for singing before Kṛṣṇa-Govinda with the accompaniment of dance. It may be that the poet and his wife actually played the roles of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā—Jayadeva sang and Padmāvatī danced (cf. *Bhaktamālā* by Rāma Sarasvatī of Cooch Bihar).[20] In the celestial song the poet has probably exhibited the sentiment of love with an allegorical explanation of divine philosophy and the spiritual yearning of the devotees to unite with the Divine.

The *Padāvalī* songs of the *Gītagovīnda* show that the poet had a sound knowledge of music. It is a common belief, current among the musicians in general and the Vaiṣṇavism in particular, that Jayadeva used to write musical scores according to different *rāgas* and *tālas* for his songs, which have remained the same even now. There is no doubt that Jayadeva, trained in music as well as in the craft of the Brāhmins, used to wander far and wide in order to get real insight of the minds of the people. Devotional songs and ecstatic dances were the festive aspects of Vaiṣṇavism. So,

being a Vaiṣṇava, Jayadeva developed these in his work, which helped the 'country jongleurs' to emphasise through their performances the sublime love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. A popular idiom was used in his country-songs. With Caitanya and his followers a way was found through *Bhakti*, music, dance and ecstasy to make the 'rich surrender part at least of their prerogatives,' for we are told that the 'whole village would dance to the next settlement in joy.'

However, it was not the intention of Jayadeva to write a book on the grammar of music, nor it was his intention that people would honour his work as one of the text books on music. But, the *Gītagovinda* has added a new chapter to the history of music in India. Jayadeva was well-versed in vocal music. Towards the end of the *Gītagovinda*, we see that Jayadeva gives stress on the *Gāndharva-kalā*.[21] It is not certain whether *Gāndharva* music is a variant form of *Mārga* or classical music. But, Śārṅgadeva, a contemporary of Jayadeva, has stated that *Mārga* music was known also as *Gāndharva* music in olden days.[22] Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* is a finished literary product of the medieval times. His work, however, has been interpreted by various scholars in numerous ways. Thus, while some have noticed only literary charm in it, others noticed a religious fervour. Though a Kṛṣṇaite Vaiṣṇava, Jayadeva was essentially a poet. His sole concern was to compose a lyric *kāvya* depicting the divine amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and not a religious treatise based on the Vaiṣṇava dogmas.[23] The presiding sentiment of his *kāvya* is erotic-*mādhurya*. So, it can be designated as a great erotico-religious work of the medieval times. However, the quick popularity of the work was due to its literary charm and erotico-religious sentiment. In the opinion of Dr. S. K. De,[24] the erotic aspect of the work of Jayadeva was not a new development, for since the days of Hāla—the author of the Prākṛt work, *Gāhā Sattasai*—the common characteristic of the songs on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa was eroticism. In the *Kumārasambhava* also (canto VIII) the love-scenes of Śiva and

Pārvatī have been described with lavish details. So, it may be seen that the tendency of ascribing sensual attributes to Divine Beings is as old as Kālidāsa.

From a study of the above, it will be clear that Jayadeva was not the originator of the practice of composing poems on the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Poems on this topic probably had their origin in some Prākṛt or vernacular works of the Pāla period. It has been justly said by Dr. S. K. Chatterji that the basis or model of the *Gītagovinda* was perhaps 'a vernacular lyric[25] drama' of the pre-Jayadeva times. From the 10th century onwards, songs in praise of Kṛṣṇa and his lovers (later on Rādhā also) went on being composed in an increasing number. During the 11th-12th century, the Kṛṣṇa saga was really a high and learned subject; and verses were composed in the Prākṛt, Sanskrit and vernacular languages, though some positive proofs in support of the same cannot be given at present. Stories on 'erotic devotionalism', chiefly centring round Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, were probably invented in Bengal by a band of poets, who graced the court of the early Sena kings. These poets went on composing new love-poems, be they secular or devotional, and tried to create a variation of significant situations or new sequences in the love-stories. Now, Jayadeva (and Vidyāpati, too) frankly exploited what was for a long time a 'recognised literary convention'.[26]

As regards the possible source of the *Gītagovinda*, nothing can be said very assertively. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, a work of pre-Jayadeva time, could not have been the basis[27] of the *Gītagovinda* for unlike Jayadeva the said *purāṇa* did not mention Rādhā as the consort of Kṛṣṇa, though the *pradhānā-gopī* has been referred to in it.[28] On the basis of some parallelisms between the treatment of amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by Jayadeva on one hand, and that of the *Brahmavaivartta-purāṇa*, on the other, some would suggest that the basis of Jayadeva's work was the said *purāṇa*.[29] Like this *purāṇa*, Jayadeva, also, has presented the love-sequences of Rādhā

7

and Kṛṣṇa in a living sensuous background. The opening verse of the *Gītagovinda* tallies well with a similar episode described in chapter 15 of the *Kṛṣṇajanma-khaṇḍa* section of the said *purāṇa*. Moreover, the erotico-religious aspect of lord Kṛṣṇa has been described by the both. These similarities, however, cannot prove the indebtedness of Jayadeva to this late *purāṇic* work. There are some disparties also. A refined poet like Jayadeva could not have based his work on a grossly sensuous and late *purāṇa* like the aforesaid one. Moreover, the episode, described in the *purāṇa*, seems to be a later interpolation.

It is said that 'the exaltation of Rādhā is a distinctive feature' of the *Brahmavaivartta-purāṇa*, *Gītagovinda* as also of the Nimbārka sect.[30] It may be due to their common source, which is perhaps now obscure to us; or it may be altogether different. The existence of such an unknown earlier source, different from the *Bhāgavata*, is not to be ruled out, for even during Caitanya's time when the *Bhāgavata* emotionalism was fully established, there are evidences as to the existence of a different kind of Vaiṣṇava devotionalism, which did not strictly conform to the *Bhāgavata* ideals (cf. Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa's *Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrttana*).[31] This type of emotionalism was widespread enough to have been widely and popularly utilised (see, ante).

Whatever may be the source of the *Gītagovinda*, this much is certain that its songs mark the beginning of the *Padāvalī* literature. It may be remarked that the Sanskrit verses of the *Gītagovinda* are the precursors of the Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī* songs. The poet himself has described his songs as *padāvalī*. The *Caryāpadas*, which stand at the head of the Bengali literature,[32] have a close relationship with the *padāvalī* of Jayadeva and other later poets.

The *Gītagovinda* has often been designated as a dramatic work. Thus, while Lassen would call it a 'lyrical drama,' Schroeder a 'lyric-dramatic poem' and a 'refined yātrā,' Jones a 'pastoral drama', Levi an 'opera' and Pischel a 'melo-

drama'.[33] Though, there is no dearth of Prākṛt or *Apabhraṁśa* dramas, pastoral in character, like the *Lalita-Mādhava*, *Pārijāta-haraṇa*, *Gopāla-keli-candrikā*, *Mahānāṭaka* and *Svapnavilāsa*, the *Gītagovinda* cannot be classed with them. It is neither a full-fledged *kāvya*, nor a drama, nor an old *yātrā* like play-let. Jayadeva has inserted the songs composed after popular models in the frame of a *kāvya*, followed by rustic dances with music and singing.[34] In IV. 9 of the work the poet himself has remarked that his songs should be 'performed in mind' (*manasā-naṭanīyam*).[34] The recitative verses and rhymed dance-songs (with a refrain) are reminiscent of the popular poetry. Whatever may be the true nature of the *Gītagovinda*, it is apparent that the work was a lyrical *Kṛṣṇa-yātrā*, imbued with religious feelings fit to be sung or staged at popular festivals. It has a form, unrelated with any conventional classification. In fact, Jayadeva's songs were sung in the accompaniment of dances at religious festivals, including the temple-services. From inscriptional and other evidences,[34a] it is proved that the *Gītagovinda* was actually danced or sung at Purī and Kenduli. Even in the early decades of the present century a certain *Kṛṣṇa-nāṭaka*, a 'lyrical drama' after the model of the *Gītagovinda*, was performed by trained actors. Though erotic by nature, the poem has certainly a religious character, for the eroticism of the work was never more than a part of *Bhakti* as understood by the poet.

The love songs of India may be designated as a branch of ornate court-poetry and as such there was no dearth of connoisseurs or admirers. Credit must go to Jayadeva for his harmonious blending of love lyrics with religious fervour, passion with feeling, ornate *padas* with musical melodies. This great erotico-religious poem of Jayadeva soon caught the imagination of people at large, as they thought it to be a fit-vehicle for expressing their surging devotional feelings. Even before the advent of Caitanya, this work claimed a wide circulation throughout India. It has claimed more than forty

commentaries[34b] (from different parts of India) and more than a dozen imitations,[34c] though in some of them the love between Rāma and Sītā or between Śiva and Pārvatī was the theme. The passionate poem of Jayadeva was perhaps the inspiration of works like *Śrikṛṣṇa-kīrtana* of Baḍu.[34d] It has also been cited extensively in the anthological works like *Saduktikarṇāmṛtam*. To the Vaiṣṇavas of the medieval times, it was not only a great poem but a great religious work on *Vaiṣṇava Bhakti* also. The Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal derive religious inspirations from this great poem, and consider it as an authoritative religious treatise—illustrating its theology and poetics.[35] Dr. S. K. De has shown that the *Gītagovinda* should be taken as 'a deliberate work of art', and as such, a poet of undoubted gifts like him (Jayadeva) could not have perhaps 'composed any religious treatise according to particular Vaiṣṇava dogmatics'.[35a] 'He claims merit as a poet, and his religious inspiration should not be allowed to obscure his proper claim. His Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are considerably humanised in an atmosphere of passionate poetic appeal'. It has also been argued by Dr. De that it was 'not unusual in older poetry to present poetics and even secular things under the garb of religion, and Jayadeva's devotion to Kṛṣṇa had nothing to do with poetry'.[36] It is said that Jayadeva gave more emphasis on *vilāsakalā* or erotic elements than on *Harismaraṇam* or religious aspects. As Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* abounds with the erotic sentiment, some have tried to call him a 'Sahajiyā'.[37] According to MM. H. P. Shastri, Jayadeva was indebted to the 'Sahajiyās',[38] who consider him as their 'Ādiguru' and one of nine 'Rasika-puruṣas'. But, it seems incredible that Jayadeva described the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa only to enjoy its grossly sensuous aspect. In Vaiṣṇava poems, the *sakhīs* nodoubt enjoy the playful union of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā from a distance, but, they unlike the 'Sahajiyās' are not mute and idle onlookers, they actually play an important role in effecting their union. Jayadeva has tried to show that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being Himself,

and Rādhā His *Hlādinī Śakti* (innate power of Bliss). Union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa may indicate the union of *Śakti* with the *Śaktimān*. Thus, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa of Jayadeva is devoid of passion. The erotic elements in his poem may be explained away as purely allegorical or symbolical representation of highly spiritual ideas.

On the authority of some secular and non-sectarian verses (composed on Śiva, Gaṅgā etc.) of Jayadeva, quoted in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, Dr. S. K. Chatterji would describe him as a *Pañcopāsaka Smārta*, who was later raised to the status of a Vaiṣṇava saint.[38] But, the Vaiṣṇava leaning of the poet, is too obvious to be ignored.

Jayadeva was a staunch Vaiṣṇava, more precisely a staunch Kṛṣṇaite, who sang the glory of Kṛṣṇa-Govinda. Even a critic like Dr. De has not doubted the Vaiṣṇava leaning of the poet.[39] For this particular reason, he emphasises in his poem the praise and worship of Kṛṣṇa, and claims religious merit. Epithets like Madhuripu, Kaṁsadviṭ, Keśava etc., have many times been used by Jayadeva. But, that was probably done in order to sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa and his *Vrajalīlā*.

Jayadeva's firm faith in Vaiṣṇavism is too obvious to be ignored or challenged. (He) the poet is credited for the systematisation of the list of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu (cf. also the *Daśāvatāra-carita* of Kṣemendra). His devotion to the ten incarnations (particularly to Kṛṣṇa) is apparent from a study of the *Daśāvatāra-stuti* verses. He considers Kṛṣṇa as the source of all these incarnations (cf. verses like *Keśava dhṛta daśavidharūpa* and *Daśakṛti-kṛte Kṛṣṇāya tubhyam namaḥ*). The immense popularity of the *Daśāvatāra-stotra* in and outside Bengal shows that the people were greatly moved by the devotional leaning of the poet. An inscription of Śārṅgadeva of 1292 A. D. may be cited as an example. Some have argued that the work of Jayadeva is not, in its form and spirit, that expression of an intensely devotional personality,

in the sense, in which Līlāsuka-Bilvamangala's *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta* is.[40]

The true nature of the *Gītagovinda* or the celestial song in honour of Govinda, the Almighty, has not been understandable to some orientologists. As for example, Dr. Keith[41] would say that there was little in the work which was divine, and that it was an 'idle fancy' which saw 'in the sports of the god with the maidens the entry of the soul into the confusion and incoherence of the manifold, whence he emerged 'to the love of Rādhā the bliss of the absolute unity.' To Jayadeva, the myth of Kṛṣṇa was a living reality. But, it may be argued that the mystic explanations, offered by the *Vaiṣṇava śāstrakāras*, to the *Rāsakrīḍā* and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa myth, are not to be poohpoohed as an 'idle fancy.' The union of Rādhā or *Jīvaprakṛti* with Kṛṣṇa or *Puruṣottama*, the Supreme Being, is the key-note of the *Gītagovinda*. Rādhā's deep yearning for Kṛṣṇa, the *Śaktimān*, is not easily understandable to the uninitiated persons. A close study of verses (v. 1, canto 1; v. 3 after pra. 18, Canto 9; v. 8, pra 2, Canto 1) clearly shows that Jayadeva's work is not devoid of any deep devotion to Kṛsṇa. The prevalence of erotic sentiment in the *Gītagovinda* is not altogether without any reason or meaning. For Jayadeva, who has described the sports of his beloved god Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu, knew it very well that the presiding deity of the 'erotic sentiment' was Viṣṇu (cf. the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata and the *Viṣṇudharmottaram*).[42] So, Jayadeva has acted according to the *Śāstras*. From a study of the aforesaid verses as also of v. 2., Canto 1; * v. 3, Canto 1; * v. 8, pra 2, Canto 1; v. 16, pra 2, Canto 1; v. 9, pra. 3, Canto 1; v. 9, pra 4, Canto 1; v. 12, pra 4, Canto 1; v. 9, pra 5, Canto 2; v. 9, pra 6, Canto 2; v. 12, pra 6, Canto 2; * v. 10, pra 7, Canto 3; v. 10, pra 7, Canto 3; v. 9, pra 8, Canto 4; v. 7, pra 9, Canto 4; v. 13, pra 9, Canto 4; v. 5, pra 10, Canto 5; v. 8, pra 11, Canto 5; v. 7 after pra 11, Canto 5; v. 8, pra 12, Canto 6; *v. 8, pra 13, Canto 7; v. 8, pra 15, Canto 7; v. 8. pra 16, Canto 7; v. 8, pra 17, Canto 8; * v. 8, pra 18, Canto 9; v. 8, pra 18,

Canto 9; v. 8, pra 20, Canto 11; v. 8, pra 22, Canto 11; v. 8; pra 23, Canto 12; v. 8, pra 24, Canto 12 and * v. 10, Canto 12 it seems that Jayadeva was a staunch Kṛṣṇaite Vaiṣṇava.*

It is said that Jayadeva erected the images of Rādhā and Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa) at Kenduli. In v. 8, pra 21, Canto 11 of the *Gītagovinda* (*Rasikapriyā-ṭīkā*), there is a reference to the erection of a temple of Lakṣmī (Padmāvatī) by Jayadeva at Tindubilva or Kendubilva (modern Kenduli). It is said that Jayadeva used to sing his *Gītagovinda* before lord Jagannātha at Purī, thereby flouting the standing order of the king of Orissa that only his (the king's) *Gītagovinda* should be sung at the temple of the said deity. An Oriya inscription at Purī temple, bearing a date corresponding to 1499[43] A. D., shows that the *Gītagovinda* was actually sung before lord Jagannātha on festive occasions.

Jayadeva has been described as a Vaiṣṇava by his biographers. Various legends connected with him also corroborate this view. References should be made here to the *Jayadeva-Caritrī*[44] of Vanamālī Dāsa, *Bhaktamālā* (in Sanskrit) of Candradatta and *Bhaktamāl* (in Hindi) of Nābhājīdāsa.

* Specially cf:—

1 *Harismaraṇe sarasaṁ manaḥ* (v. 3, Canto 1);
2 *Tava caraṇe praṇatā* &c. (v. 8, pra 2, Canto 1);
3 *Jayadevakena Hareridaṁ pravaṇena|* (v. 10, pra 7, Canto 3);
4 *Haricaraṇa-śaraṇa Jayadeva Kavibhāratī|*
(v. 8, pra 13, Canto 7);

5 *Govindapadāravindam -*
aśubhaskandāya vandāmahe||
(v. 8, pra 18, Canto 9;

6 *Yaṭ Gāndharvva-kalāsu kauśalam-anudhyānañca*
Yad-Vaiṣṇavam yacchṛṅgāra-
viveka-tattvamapi yat kāvyeṣu līlāyitam|
Tatsarvvam Jayadeva-paṇḍita-kaveḥ Kṛṣṇaikatānātmanaḥ|
Sānandāḥ pariśodhayantu sudhiyaḥ

Srī Gītagovindataḥ||
(v. 10, Canto 12).

REFERENCES:

Chapter V.

1 Lassen's edn. of *Gītagovinda*, Bonn, 1836 ; Nirṇaya-Sāgar Press edn., Bombay, 1917, 1923 ; Calcutta edn., 1881 ; H. K. Mukherji (in Beng.), Calcutta, 1929, 1956 : Pischel, *Hofdichter des Lakṣmaṇasena*, Goettingen, 1893 : Grierson, *Vernacular Lit. of India*, Calcutta, 1889, *Sec.* 51 ; Colebrooke, *J.A.S.B.*, 1888, p. 12. Also see Eng. trs. of E. Arnold and G. Keyt.

2 For *Orissa trad.*—Based upon Candradatta's *Bhaktamālā* in Skt.

3 For *Mithilā trad.*—*J.A.S.B.*, 1888, p. 12. (supported by Grierson).

4 Candradatta's Skt. *Bhaktamālā*, Cantos 39-41 (Quoted in the N.S.P. edn. ; Grierson, *op cit.*, as also in *J.A.S.B.*, 1884, p. 88 ; Pischel, *op cit.*, pp. 19. 23.

5 M. M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.*, 1906. vol. 2. no. 5, N. S., pp. 162-65.

6 There were two other Jayadevas—one a rhetorician and other a dramatist.

7 For K. N. Mahāpātra's article on Jayadeva see, vol. 7. (nos. 3 and 4) of the *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, p. 191 ff.

8 For S. Hota's views, see, *Proc. All-India Or. Conf.*, 1955, p. 174 ff.

9 K. N. Mahāpātra, *op cit.*; also see Hota's views.

10 For the views of Lassen and M. Chakraverty, see ante ; Sir W. Jones, *Collected Works*, London, 1897.

11 In the verse no. XII. 11, not commented upon by Kumbha (middle of the 15th cent. A. D.), it is said that Jayadeva was the son of Bhojadeva and Rāmādevī. But the verse has been accepted as a genuine one by other commentators, and is found by Bühler in the *Kashmir MS.* as well as in the *Nepāl MSS.*, dated in 1994 A. D.

11A Though the pedestrian couplet, preserving an old tradition refers to the 'five gems' of Lakṣmaṇa's court, Kumbha in his com. on *Gītgov.*, *I. 4.* has referred to six poets, adding Dhoyī and substituting Śrutidhara for Kavirāja.

12 It is said that Sanātana Gosvāmī actually saw the verse entitled '*Govardhanaśca* etc.', engraved on the entrance to the court-hall of Lakṣmaṇsena at Navadvīp. Vide, H. K. Mukherji's *Bīrbhūm Vivaraṇa* (in Bengali), p. 196 & *Intro. to Kavi Jayadeva O Gītagovinda* (in Bengali), 1956.

13 "The facade of the temple of Rādhā-Govinda at Kenduli is richly decorated with brick-tiles, representing the various incarnations

of Vishṇu and scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* including the war between the monkey and the demon". A. S. Reports.

— *Arch. Surv. of India, Annual Report*, 1923-24, p. 33.

In v. 8, pra 21, Canto 11 of the *Gītogovinda*, there is a reference to the erection of a temple of Lakṣmī (Padmāvatī) by Jayadeva at Kenduvilva or Kenduli.

14 Bühler, *Kashmir Report*, p. 64 ff.

15 Aüfrecht, *Catalogus Catalogorum*, p. 430; H. P. Sastri, *Nepāl Catalogue*, vol. 1 (MS. No. 468 'ka'), p. 16 and *J.A.S.B.*, 1906, p. 166.

16 Ed. Sukumar Sen, Hrishikesh Series, 1927, pp. 69-71.

17 Published by the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat, MM. H. P. Sastri's introduction.

18 Referred to in the *Or. His. Res. Jour.*, vol. 7, p. 192.

19 The poet has divided his work into 12 Cantos, and 24 sections, composed in varied metres to be sung in sets of 8 stanzas to different tunes. The songs are placed in the mouths of Kṛṣṇa, his beloved Rādhā, and a friend of the latter; they are introduced by verses setting out the situation which gives them birth, and they are followed by prayers addressed to Kṛṣṇa. There is no dialogue in the strict sense of a drama, and the three characters are engaged in a kind of lyrical monologue.

20 Cf *Jayadeva Mādhavar stuti ka*
varṇāve Padmāvatī aganta bhaṅgibhāve//
Kṛṣṇar gītaka Jayadeva nigadati/
Rūpakatāle cebe nāce Padmāvatī//
— *Bhaktamālā*
(Cooch Behar).

This is a work of the mid-15th century A. D., vide, Dr. S. K. Chatterji's views in *Bhāratvarṣa*, Śrāvaṇa, 1350 B. S. p. 137.

21 Vide, v. 10, Canto 12 of the *Gītagovinda*, viz. *Yat Gāndharvva-kalāsu kauśalam etc.*

22 *Saṅgītasāra*, p. 30.

23 Dr. S. K. De, *Festschrift Moriz Winternitz*, 1933, p. 198 ff.; *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal*, 1942. p. 8.

24 S. K. De, *History of Classical Sanskrit Lit.*, 1948, p. 342 ff.

25 S. K. Chatterji, *op. cit.*, p. 137; *O.D.B.L.*, vols. 1 & 2, pp. 387 and 1063-65 respectively; *D.H.B.*, vol. 1, p. 391 ff.

26 S. K. De, *Festschrift etc.*, p. 198 ff.: *Vaiṣṇva Faith and Movement in Bengal*, pp. 9-10.

27 *Ibid.*

28 The Bengali commentators of the *Śrīmadhāgavata* (of the Bengal Recension) would, however, see a veiled reference to Rādhā in *'anayā-Rādhito nūnam Bhagavān Hariśvara'*, verse 28, Chap. 30. But, it is a matter of interpretation.

29 S. K. De, *op cit.*

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid;* also see, Basantaranjan Ray's edn. of *Śrī-kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, *V.S.P.*, Calcutta, 4th edn. (preface).

32 S. K. Chatterji, *Origin and Development of Bengali Language (O.D.B.L.)*, Calcutta, 1926, vol. 1, pp. 24 ff. and 125 ff.; Pischel, *K. G.*, p. 209; Keith, *Hist. of Skt. Lit.*, p. 197 ff.

33 Lassen, *Prologmena* to his edn. of *Gītagovinda*, Bonn, 1836; also see N. Chatterji's *Indische Essays*, Zurich, 1883, p. 4, ff.; W. Jones, Collected Works, 1807 and *As. Res.*, vol. 3, p. 183 ff.; S. Levi, Preface to Courtillier's edn. Paris, 1904, pp. v. ff. and 234 ff.; Pischel, K. G., p. 209 ff. and *Hofdichter* etc., p. 17 ff; Keith, *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 40 and *Hist. of Skt. Lit.*, p. 197 ff.; L. v. Schroeder, *I.L.C.*, pp. 563 ff., 580 ff.

34 M. Winternitz, *Hist. of Indian Lit.* (Tr. by Miss Köhn), C. U., 1959, p. 136. Is G. G. a 'śravya-kāvya'?

34A In a stone inscription dated in *Saṁvat* 1348 a verse from the *Gītagovinda* (I. 16) has been quoted, see M. R. Majumdar's artile in *Jour. Univ. Bombay, vol. 6*, pp. 6, p. 125. Another inscription of the year 1499 A. D. shows that the Vaiṣṇava female singers and dancers should learn and sing only the songs from the *Gītagovinda*, see *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 62, 1893, pp. 96-97 and *J.A.S.B.*, 1906, vol. 2, no. 5, N. S., p. 168. MM. H. P. Sastri has remarked in the pages of *Jour. Bihar and Orissa Res. Soc.* (vol. 5, 1919, p. 175) that the songs of the *Gītagovinda* were actually sung in the temple of Jagannātha, Purī in his time. Sir W. Jones has also shown that the *Gītagovinda* was sung and danced in the annual festivals connected with the birthday anniversaries of the poet at Kenduli in his time, for his views, see, *As. Res.*, vol. 3, p. 183. Rājā Rāmavarmā of Travancore, has shown in an article, published in the pages of *J.R.A.S.*, (1910, p. 638), that lyrical *Kṛṣṇa-nāṭakas* in the model of *Gītagovinda* were performed in Malabar even in the first decade of the present era.

34B Of the commentaries the following need special mention:—

(a) *Nepāl MS.*, dated 1494 A. D.

(b) *Kāshmīr MS.*

(c) *Rasika-priyā-ṭīkā* of Rāṇā Kumbha (circa 15th century A. D).

(d) *Rasamañjarī* of Śaṅkara Miśra and

(e) *Bālabodhinī* of Caitanyadāsa.

34C Of the slavish imitations of the *Gītagovinda* the following are important:—

(a) *Gīta-gaṅgādhara* of Kalyāṇa,

(b) *Gīta-gaurīśa* of Bhānudatta,

(c) *Gīta-Rāghava* of Prabhākara,

(d) *Gīta-digambara* of Vaṁśamaṇi,

(e) *Rāma-Gītagovinda*, erroneously ascribed to Jayadeva, and

(f) *Abhinava-Gītagovinda* of the Gajapati king, Puruṣottama-deva.

34D It has inspired not only poets, but painters as well. Ref. may be made to the Basohli, Gujrati and Rajasthani paintings of the late medieval times.

35 See, S. K. De's *Festschrift Moriz Winternitz*, 1933, p. 202 ff.; *New Indian Antiquary*, vol. 9, 1947.; *Vaiṣṇava Faith & Movement* etc., p. 8 ff.

35A & 36 *Ibid*.

37 H. P. Sastri's edn. of *Kīrttilatā*, 1331 B. S., Intro. only; S. K. De, *Dacca Hist. of Bengal*, vol. 1, p. 370 ff.

38 S. K. Chatterji, *Bhāratvarṣa*, 1350 B. S., p. 138.

39 S. K. De, *Vaiṣṇava Faith & Movement* etc., p. 9.

40 S. K. De, *D.H.B.*, I, p. 370 ff.; also see, *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta*, ed. by S. K. De, 1930, Dacca, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

41 Keith, *Classical Skt. Lit.*, 5th edn., p. 114.

42 Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (As. Soc. edn.) and *Viṣṇudharmottaram* (G.O.S.).

43 *J.A.S.B.*, vol. 62, 1893, pp. 96-97.

44 *Jayadeva-Caritrī* of Banamālī Dās, Intro. by H. P. Sastri. For other two works, see *ante*.

CHAPTER V

VAIṢṆAVISM IN BENGAL AS KNOWN FROM SOME MEDIEVAL TEXTS

It is a known fact that the study of Sanskrit in Bengal received a great impetus from the Sena kings. It had been a part of their policy to encourage the Brāhmaṇas. The court-language of the Senas was Sanskrit, the vehicle of Brāhmaṇical religion. People of the Sena and the post-Sena times used to follow the injunctions of both the *Śrutis* and the *Smṛtis*. The copying and study of the *Śrauta* and *Smārta* texts as also of the epics and the *purāṇas* were highly encouraged. Besides this, many original poems, dramas and 'religious digests' or compendia were composed in Sanskrit. Commentaries on many important works were also brought out. After the gradual diffusion of the Sanskrit language, serious attempts were made also to develop the vernacular languages, specially Bengali. As a result of this, Bengali language and literature flourished, and various works were composed in that language. They were based on the classical epics and the *purāṇas*. They may be classified under the following heads:—

(a) Free translations of the epics—the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, and the *purāṇas*, specially the *Bhāgavata*, in which some new matters were incorporated,

(b) Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī*,

and (c) Other poems arising out of the *laukika* cults, viz. *Maṅgalakāvyas* and the *Vijayakāvyas*.

Among the Sanskrit works on *kāvya*, *nāṭaka* and 'religious digests' in general, some were definitely written with a Vaiṣṇavite bias. Of these, reference may be made to the *Anargha-Rāghava* of Murāri Miśra (*circa* 12th century A.D.)

Naiṣadha-caritam of Śrīharsa (also of the same period), some *Tāntric*-Vaiṣṇava works in the manuscript form as found in Nepal (belonging to a period between 11th and 13th century A.D.), *Varṣakriyā-kaumudī* of Govindānanda, a Vaiṣṇava digest of *circa* 16th century A.D., and *Haribhakti-vilāsa* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa of *circa* 17th century A.D., also an important religious digest of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas. Reference has also been made to some other Sanskrit texts.

Of the vernacular texts mention may be made of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* of Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa (*circa* 15th century A.D.), *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* of Mālādhara Vasu (approximately of the same time) and the Avahaṭṭha songs (*padāvalī*) of Vidyāpati (belonging almost to the same age). The Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛittivāsa Ojhā (*circa* 15th century A.D.) was very popular with the average Bengali householders in the medieval times.

Of other vernacular or Prākṛt texts, the two, viz. the *Prākṛt Kalpataru* (*circa* 12th-16th century A.D.) and *Prākṛt Paiṅgala* (*circa* 15th century A.D.), containing verses on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme, need special mention.

A. *Sanskrit & Prākṛt Works*

I. *Murāri Miśra and the Anargha-Rāghava*:

A noted Sanskrit dramatist of the 12th century A.D. was Murāri Miśra. His *Anargha-Rāghava*[1] is a fine specimen of the dramatic art. The date of this drama is 1100 *Śaka* (1178 A.D.), the author (he) being thus a contemporary of Jayadeva. Murāri wrote this drama for the purpose of being staged at the temple of lord Puruṣottama (Jagannātha) in Purī on festive occasions, such as *Rathayātrā*. Murāri was a native of Paścima-Rāḍha (W. Rāḍha) in Gauḍadeśa. He belonged to the Brāhmaṇical order of the 'Western Vaidika School'.

In the *Anargha-Rāghava*, some verses praising lord Rāmacandra (Rāma-Dāśarathī) have been quoted. Of the four attributes of the lord, viz Kaumodakī, Puṇḍarīka and

Kambu (Śaṅkha), have been mentioned (cf. *verse no. 1*). In the second verse an obeisance has been made to lord Jagannātha (Jagannidhi).

Next, in the *prastāvanā* verse (page 2), the poet expresses his earnest desire to present the work before the audience assembled in the temple of Jagannātha for a festive occasion (like *Rathayātrā*) (*Bhagavataḥ Śrī Puruṣottamasya yātrām-upasthāpanīyaḥ sarvve sabhāsadaḥ*). The expression, '*Kamalā-kucakalasa keli-kasturikā-patrāṅkurasya*' qualifies *Bhagavat* Puruṣottama. Can the word '*Mahānīlamani*', referred to in the above verse, be in any way connected with great Purī (Nīlācala) famous for its Vaiṣṇavite activities ? At *page 4* of this work a reference has been made to *Garuḍadhvaja* (the Garuḍa standard). It is interesting to note that Murāri styles himself *Bāla-Vālmikī* (see the *prastāvanā verse*).

II. *Śrīharṣa and the Naiṣadha-caritam* :

Scholars are not uniform in their opinions as regards the native place of Śrīharṣa, the celebrated author of the *Naiṣadhacaritam*,[2] *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya* and *Gauḍorvvīśakula-praśasti*. Thus, while some would try to call him a Bengalee, there are others who would locate his home either at Kanauj or at Benaras, or at Kashmir.[3]

According to the *Pravandha-cintāmaṇi* of Rājaśekhara Sūri (1348 A. D.), Śrīharṣa flourished in the court of king Jayacandra of Kanauj (c. 1170-1184 A. D.).[4] Some have identified him with his namesake, the king of Benaras. The poet himself has admitted in his *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya*[5] that he was gratified by the king of Kanauj. According to Gadādhara, Śrīharṣa was the court poet of king Govindacandra, the grandfather of king Jayantacandra. In the opinion of Gopīnātha, the commentator of his *Gauḍorvvīśakulapraśasti*,[6] the poet Śrīharṣa wrote it in praise of the king Vijayasena of Bengal. Vidyāpati, the great Maithila poet, too, in his *Puruṣaparīkṣā* has assigned the poet to the *Gauḍaviṣaya*, i. e. Bengal.[7] Some

verses of the *Naiṣadhacaritam* have been quoted in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛtam* of *Śrīdharadāsa*, and must therefore be older than 1206 A. D. the date of that anthology.[8] Thus, his time falls in the 3rd or 4th quarter of the 12th century.

The theory that Śrīharṣa was a Bengalee poet seems to be very convincing. Moreover, some words peculiar to the Bengali language are found in the *Naiṣadhacaritam*. Some Bengali customs are also recorded in it (*ulūlu*, *vāsarghar*, *kalāgach* etc.)[9] Śrīharṣa appears to have been eclectic in his religious views. His devotion to Viṣṇu, however, can be inferred from the high praises of the god in the *Naiṣadhacarita* (*X. 69-90*). He was a philosopher of the first order.

The study of the *Naiṣadhacaritam* gives us a glimpse of the religious beliefs prevalent in the 12th century A. D. References to the idols of Viṣṇu, Śiva and Sūrya have been given in it. Verse *41* (*XXI*), for example, makes mention of the common emblems of Viṣṇu, viz. conch, disc, lotus and mace. The conch and lotus are mentioned again and again in *XXI. 98-100*. His *vanamālā* is referred to in *XXI. 99*. The idols were worshipped daily, and every family had its own tutelary deity. The *Puruṣasūkta* hymn was uttered first in the worship of Viṣṇu. The twelve-lettered Vaiṣṇava *mantra*, viz. '*Oṁ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*' was repeated 12 times during the worship, and the number of his idols was also 12 (*XXI. 41*). At the end of the worship a garland was offered at the feet of the image (*XXI. 49*). After this followed prayers (*XXI. 50*). The ladies were also entitled to worship deities (*XXI. 121.*). Various things like flowers, cakes, turmeric, water etc. were offered to the deity at the time of worship (see, *Acts VII & XXI*). It is interesting to note here that the 'Car procession' of Puruṣottama (having some resemblance with that of the god in Purī), which occurs on the occasion of the great festival—on the full-moon day in the month of Jyaiṣṭha—has been mentioned in *XV. 89*.

The *Naiṣadhacaritam* supplies us the names of the following incarnations of Viṣṇu:—(1) Varāha, (2) Nṛsiṁha, (3) Vāmana, (4) Trivikrama, (5) Rāma, (6) Paraśurāma, (7) Balarāma, (8) Kṛṣṇa, (9) Dattātreya and (10) Kalki. It is interesting to note that Śrīharṣa has not mentioned the Matsya and Kūrma incarnations of Viṣṇu, and in their stead has included Dattātreya, a popular incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is also to be noted here that Śrīharṣa has made a distinction between the Trivikrama and Vāmana forms of Viṣṇu. He has considered Dattātreya as a human incarnation of Viṣṇu. Images of Viṣṇu as Dattātreya are very rare in Bengal.

III. *Vaiṣṇava Tantras*:

Reference should be made here to some *Vaiṣṇava Tantras*,[10] extant in the eastern region particularly in Nepal and written and copied either in the *Newārī* or in the *Maithili* script. They are as follows:—

(a) *Devāmṛta Pañcarātram*—

Script.—*Newārī. No. 1078, 'Ga'*, pp. 106 and lxxvi.

It is a *Vaiṣṇava Tantra*. written in ungrammatic Sanskrit. It begins with an invocation to lord Vāsudeva, viz. *'Oṁ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya'*. It treats on the consecration of images and temples of Viṣṇu. It also deals with the nature of Viṣṇu whether he has any form or not and various other allied topics.

(b) *Gopāladhyānarāja* (*Gopāla-tantrīya*)—

Script.—*Newārī, No. 1508, 'Gha'* pp. 61 and lxxvi

It deals with the formula of meditation on the Gopāla form of Kṛṣṇa. It derives its source from an unknown *Tāntric* work, viz. *Gopālatantra*.

(c) *Brahmayāmala*—

Script—*Newārī, No. III, 370*, pp. 60-62 and xxii. Date—N. S. 172=1052 A. D. (N. S. stands for *Newārī Saṁvat*).

It belongs to all the six schools of *Tantra*. The worship of deities in united forms such as: Brahmā and Sarasvatī, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Śiva and Tārā gives rise to the term, *Yāmala*.

(d) *Brahma Saṁhitā*—

Script.—*Newārī, No. III. 380B*, pp. 75 and xxiii. Date—N.S. 315=1195 A.D.

It is a *Vaiṣṇava Tantra*. Like many Vaiṣṇava works, it was current in South India. It is said that Śrī-Caitanya brought this to Bengal from the South in the beginning of the 15th century A.D. The present MS., written in Newārī script, bears the date 315 in the Newārī era, which is equivalent to 1195 A. D. It may be observed here that this *Tāntric* work was not only extant in Nepal, but also in Bengal. The work is also known as Viṣṇurahasya, or 'the Secrets of the worship of Viṣṇu'. Colophon of folio *13B*, records it as *Viṣṇuprokta Saṁhitā*. It speaks of festivals or *vratas* like *Śrāvaṇa-dvādaśī* (*37B*), *Anantadvādaśī* (*27B*). *Snānadvādaśī* (*69 ?*) etc., which are still current among the devout Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal. Two chapters (*76A* and *78A*) are devoted to Govinda and Viṣṇu respectively. The last chapter (*85A*) of the work, viz. *Pratimā-Lakṣaṇam* deals with the dedication of the temples and consecration of images therein.

(e) *Sārasaṁgrahaḥ* (*Dharmaśāstram*)—

Script.—*Newārī, No. 1320, Ka*, pp. 48 and ix. Date—N. S. 375=1255 A. D.

It seems to indicate stages in the process of *Tāntric Vaiṣṇavism* being incorporated into Hinduism. It is written with the object of reconciling the *Vedas* with the Vaiṣṇava doctrine. This text was edited by Krishṇa Gopāl Goswāmī of the University of Calcutta some years ago.

Mention should be made here of the illustrations of god Viṣṇu, made on the wooden boards of two MSS. the *Piṅgalāmata* and *Guhyakātantra.* They are some of the finest specimens of Nepalese MS. Painting. The former (No. *III* 376B, page 69, & XXII, N.S. 294=1174 A. D.) shows s four-armed Viṣṇu riding on Garuḍa (half-bird and half-man with a beak). The latter (*III*, 377*A*, page 71, N.S. 525=1405 A.D.) illustrates three images in centre—Viṣṇu with four hands riding on Garuḍa; (on the left) a two-armed Lakṣmī sitting on a lotus; and (on the right) a four-armed Sarasvatī seated also on a lotus.

IV. *Works of Bṛhaspati Miśra, Rāyamukuṭa.*

Bṛhaspati Miśra, Rāyamukuṭa[11] was a great Sanskritic Scholar, who graced the court of emperor Jalāluddīn (late 14th century A. D.). He was a Brāhmin of the 'Mahintāpaniyā Gāñi' of the 'Rāḍhī' class. This scholar probably enjoyed a long life and served at least two or three successive Muslim rulers of Gauḍa in his capacity as a counsellor. It may be incidentally said that some Muslim rulers also patronised many Hindu poets. Bṛhaspati has many works to his credit. The following works are generally ascribed to him:—

(a) *Smṛtiratnahāra*, (b) *Vyākhyā-Bṛhaśpati*, (c) *Nirṇaya-Bṛhaspati* and (d) *Padacandrikā*.* It is said that Bṛhaspati also wrote commentaries on the *Gītagovindam* and *Meghadūtam.*

Bṛhaspati was a *parama-vaiṣṇava.* His father also was a Vaiṣṇava. Excepting the *Pada-candrikā*, his other works, specially the *Nirṇaya-Bṛhaspati* bear testimony to it (*Yaḥ prāpat praṇataḥ param/Haripadadvandāravinde ca yaḥ'//. Nirṇaya-Bṛhaspati*; *'Yaḥ Kaiṭabhāri caraṇadvayapadam-abhaṅgo....Govinda-ityavanī nirjarakuñjaro' abhūt'//* Ibid). His works generally begin with an invocation to Viṣṇu, and

* Of these, the last three works are commentaries only, while the first-mentioned one deals with the history of Brāhmaṇical faiths or codes.

contain verses on the adoration of that god. Though a Vaiṣṇava, Bṛhaspati did not mention in his *Smṛtiratnahāra*, the festivals like *Janmāṣṭamī*, *Rāsa*, *Rāmanavamī*, *Rathayātrā* and *Dolotsava*. Instead of *Rāsa*, he mentioned *Sukharātri*. He has profusely quoted the Buddhist works.

V. *The Haricarita-kavyam of Caturbhuja*:

The manuscript of *Haricarita*[12]*-kāvyam* of Caturbhuja Bhaṭṭācārya, composed in Śaka 1415 (1493 A.D.), forms a part of the collection of the Durbar Library at Kāthmaṇḍu. The poem, which is complete in 13 Cantos, may well be compared with the *Naiṣadhacaritam*. It describes the adventures of Kṛṣṇa, the 8th incarnation of Viṣṇu. Caturbhuja was a devout Vaiṣṇava Brāhmin, who had incidentally his residence in village Rāmakeli (dt. Maldah), the strong-hold of Vaiṣṇavism. The poet not only submitted himself to god Kṛṣṇa, but sought refuge also in his lotus-feet (of Govinda). Towards the end of the manuscript of this work, Kṛṣṇa has been invoked for quick emancipation and crossing the sea of earthly existence.

VI. *Works of Śrīnātha Ācārya Cūḍāmaṇi*

Śrīnātha,[13] a *Vedic* Brāhmin scholar of great reputation flourished in the second half of the 15th century A.D. His father Śrīkara Ācārya was also an erudite scholar. Great Raghunandana was one of the disciples of Śrīnātha. It is said that their family migrated to Bengal from Orissa. From a perusal of the works of Śrīnātha it is clear that he was a Vaiṣṇava. He has invoked Kṛṣṇa-Govinda (in his various forms) in the *Dānacandrikā* and *Kṛtya-tattvārṇava* as well as in the *Śrāddha-candrikā* and *Vivekārṇava*, while in his *Prāyaścitta-viveka* and *Śuddhi-viveka* invocation has been made to Rāma-Kamalākānta.

VII. *The Varṣakriyā-Kaumudī*

The *Varṣakriyā-Kaumudī* of Govindānanda, a *Smārta Vaiṣṇava* writer of the 16th century A.D., gives one an idea

about the religious and social duties of the average Bengali house-holders of the medieval times with particular reference to Vaiṣṇavas.[14] The family to which Govindānanda belonged was a Vaiṣṇavite one. Some of the *Pāścātya Vaidika* Brāhmins of the 'Gautama' family claimed to have descended from Ganapati Bhaṭṭa, his father. He (Govinda) has been looked upon as one of the senior contemporaries of Raghunandana. The present work is useful for our purpose inasmuchas it gives an idea about the different modes of worshipping Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva in medieval times, viz. *Vaidik pūjā*, *Tāntric pūjā* and *Miśra pūjā* (i.e., a mixture of *Vaidik* and *Tāntric*).[15] The *Vaidik pūjā* consists of invoking 'Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa' *mantras*, such as *Dhyeyaḥ sadā Savitṛ-maṇḍala madhyavartī* etc. ; *Tadviṣṇor paramaṁ padam* etc. : *Puruso' kṣayo jagadvījam-ṛṣir-Nārāyaṇa* etc. The integral part of this kind of worship involves the *Āsanaśuddhi*, *Bhūtaśuddhi*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Mātṛkānyāsa*, *Karanyāsa* & *Ṣaḍaṅganyāsa*. Among other duties, mention may be made of *Aṣṭāṅga-Namaskāra*, *Japa* or 'muttering the name of Hari-Madhusūdana', *Śrī Puruṣārādhana*, *Dhyāna* of Viṣṇu-Janārdana, *Mudrā-pradarśana* and uttering the twelve-syllabled '*Vāsudeva*' *mantra* and '*Tadviṣṇor*' *mantra*. The *Tāntric Viṣṇupūjā* includes various *prakriyas* like *Āsanaśuddhi*, *Bhūtaśuddhi*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Ṛṣyādinyāsa*, *Mātṛkānyāsa*, *Keśavādinyāsa* (*Lakṣmī-Nārāyāṇa mantra*), *Tattvanyāsa*, *Mūrttipañjaranyāsa*, *Karāṅganyāsa*, *Pīṭhanyāsa* (with the *Dhyāna*, '*Viṣṇu Śaradcandrakoṭin*' etc.), *Yonimudrā*, *Yantramaṇḍala*, *Śālagrāmaśilā pūjā*, '*Gaṇeśa*' *mantra*, *Pīṭhapūjā*, '*Viṣṇu*' *mantra* (cf. *Oṁ namo Bhagavate Viṣṇave sarvabhūtātmane Vāsudevāya* etc.), *Puṣpāñjali* & *Prāṇapratiṣṭhā*). In the *Varṣakriyā-Kaumudī*, the following 'twelve forms' of Viṣṇu, viz. Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha & Dāmodara, have also been described. These are the 12 of the 24 forms ('Caturviṁśati mūrttis' of Viṣṇu). In fact, Viṣṇu was invoked in different names such as Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva etc.; and the seven-syllabled '*Nārāyaṇa mantra*' was

used in all of them. Worship of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Subhadrā and Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa was very popular in Bengal at that time. In fine, the work under review shows that:—

(a) the *Mānasapūjā* of Viṣṇu was also in vogue in Bengal in medieval times ;

(b) the Vaiṣṇava *vratas*, like '*Uttarāyaṇa saṅkranti*' and '*Dadhi sankrānti*' were popular among the Vaiṣṇavas ; and

(c) the Vaiṣṇavas of this period consulted the following works for the worship of Viṣṇu, viz., the *Viṣṇu-dharmottaram Rāja-mārttaṇḍa*, *Varāha Saṁhitā*, *Hārīta Saṁhitā* and *Brahma Siddhānta*, besides the Vaiṣṇava *purāṇas*.

VIII. *The Haribhaktivilāsa* (*Cir.* 17th cent. A.D.)

The entire body of ritual and devotional practices of *Caitanyaism* has been codified by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, one of the six *Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs*, in his elaborate and scholarly work, the *Haribhaktivilāsa*.[16] It is an exhaustive compendium of the Vaiṣṇavite rites and customs. Compilation of such a 'religious code' was necessary for the common devotees ; and the task was accomplished with success by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa in collaboration (probably) with Sanātana. 'This stupendous compilation is now regarded to be the highest ritual authority of the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism'.

The *Haribhaktivilāsa* is an epitome of Vaiṣṇavite customs, which contains various topics on the *Smṛti*, and in this sense it may be considered as an important *Smṛti* work of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. The rituals and ceremonies, described in this work, seem to have been influenced by the *Tāntric* ideas current in the then Bengal. The *Haribhaktivilāsa* testifies to the erudition of its author in the Vaiṣṇava literature and *purāṇas* from which numerous extracts have been quoted. The bulk of these quotations, either large or small, has been taken from the following *purāṇas*:—*Bhāgavata*, *Padma*,

Skanda, Matsya, Devī, Bhaviṣya, Bhaviṣyottara, Nārada, Bṛhan-Nāradīya, Garuḍa, Narasiṁha, Kūrma, Brahma, Brahmavaivartta and *Viṣṇu*. In addition to these, many Vaiṣṇava and *Tāntric* texts, such as, *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra, Nārada Pañcarātram, Viṣṇu-dharma, Viṣṇudharmottara, Viṣṇurahasya, Śāradātilaka, Gautamīya Tantra, Kramadīpikā, Pratiṣṭhā Tantra* and *Pitṛgāthā*, have been either quoted or utilised.

The *Haribhaktivilāsa* has dealt fairly fully with the extant Vaiṣṇavite festivals of the medieval period. But, it is surprising to note that while, an important Vaiṣṇava festival like '*Rāsa-yātrā*' has been omitted, the non-Vaiṣṇava '*Śiva-rātri*' festival has been included. What more, it has said little about the worship of Kṛṣṇa or construction of images of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Of the *20 chapters* of the *Haribhakti-vilāsa*, only one (*chapter 10*), has been devoted to *Vaiṣṇava-sadācāra* ; four, to different Vaiṣṇava rites and duties (*chapters 8, 9, 11 and 13*) ; five, to fasts and observances—fortnightly and monthly (*chapters 12 to 16*) ; two, to construction and installation of images (*chapters 18 and 19*) ; and only one, to the construction of temples (*chapter 20*). *Chapters 18 and 19* are highly interesting inasmuchas they are important to the students of *Medieval Vaiṣṇava Iconography*, for they deal with the construction and installation of the images (in stone, wood and clay) of different forms of god Viṣṇu, viz. Mahā-Viṣṇu, Lokapāla-Viṣṇu, Trailokyamohana-Viṣṇu, Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Puruṣottama, Kapila, Hayagrīva, Mahā-Varāha, Trivikrama, Nṛsiṁha and other *avatāras*. These two chapters are chiefly based on the *Matsyapurāṇa, Haya-śīrṣa Pañcarātra* and *Nāradīyapurāṇa*. In fine, we see that the *Haribhakti-vilāsa* was more a compendium or a guide-book (to a Vaiṣṇava devotee) than a work on the social and legal customs and usages prevalent in medieval Bengal. For a study of Vaiṣṇavism in medieval Bengal, we cannot perhaps do without it.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa is said to have written also a smaller work, named *Satkriyāsāra-dīpikā*, dealing with the *Gṛhya* rituals, superiority of Vaiṣṇava practices and the inapplicability of *Smārta* rules to a Vaiṣṇava. It is noteworthy that some of the sacraments here are called the *Sāmavedīya*, and in almost all of them the *Tāntric* as well as the *Vedic* '*mantras*' have been profusely used.[17]

IX. (i) *The Prākṛt-Kalpataru*

The *Prākṛt-Kalpataru* of Rāmaśarman (composed some time between the beginning of the 12th century A.D. and the end of the 16th century A.D.) quotes some metrical verses (*Chapter VIII*) illustrating various exploits of Kṛṣṇa and his relation with Rādhā and the other *gopīs*.[18] According to Dr. Manmohan Ghosh, the editor of this work, these quotations were taken from some extant Prākṛt works dealing with the legendary career of Kṛṣṇa.[19] Most probably, the popularity of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends among the medieval poets of Bengal prompted him to refer to these topics.

The following verses from the *Prākṛt-Kalpataru* deal with the *Kṛṣṇāyaṇa* topics. They are:—

(a) *The exploits of Kṛṣṇa*:

(1) Killing of Kaṁsa by Kṛṣṇa—*verse no. 19.*

(2) Uprooting of the 'twin' Arjuna trees by child Kṛṣṇa (Hari)—*verse no. 33.*

(b) *Kṛṣṇa's love-romances with Rādhā and other gopīs*:

(1) Kṛṣṇa's amours with the principal *gopī* (possibly Rādhā, not mentioned by name)—*verse no.* 4.

(2) Her attitude towards Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa)—*verse no.* 7

(3) Kṛṣṇa's desire to detain her in the *Rāsa* dance—*verse no.* 12.

(4) She pleases Kṛṣṇa—*verse no.* 7.

In addition to these, the following verses also deal with amorous scenes. They are:—

(1) [A reference has been made to the love-sport of Dāmodara (Kṛṣṇa) and his beloved *gopī* (Rādhā?)]. The rival of Rādhā (Rukmiṇī or Candrāvalī?) apprehends that if their love-sport is not stopped, Rādhā (?) would almost carry away Dāmodara-Kṛṣṇa—*verse no.* 20.

(2) Kṛṣṇa is angry with Rādhā (here mentioned by name), for the latter was getting late. Her companion rebukes her for this—*verse no.* 22.

(3) The female friend of Rādhā tells Kṛṣṇa that her friend is deeply in love with him. She asks whether his love for her friend is equally deep—*verse no.* 22.

(4) The female friend informs Rādhā about the curiosity of Kṛṣṇa in her affairs—*verse no.* 23.

(5) Rādhā is so angry with Kṛṣṇa that she takes vows not to unite with him even in dream—*verse no.* 25.

(6) The female friend beseeches Rādhā to give up anger and proceed quickly to the bower-grove, where her beloved is anxiously waiting—*verse no.* 25.

(7) The lotus-eyed Rādhā (?) shines in the *Rāsa* dance—*verse no.* 28.

(8) Rādhā (?) touches Hari with her feet on some pretexts (Hari = Kṛṣṇa)—*verse no.* 29.

(9) Rādhā freely embraces Kṛṣṇa, who feels very much embarrassed due to this—*verse no.* 34.

(10) Rādhā is detaining Dāmodara (Kṛṣṇa), who is living in her own abode. This is most probably the dialogue of Rādhā's rival (Candrāvalī)—*verse no.* 35.

(11) Kṛṣṇa sells flowers to the *gopīs*—*verse no.* 9.

(12) A *gopī* is asking Kṛṣṇa, whether he would response to or reciprocate with the love shown to him (by Rādhā?)—*verse no.* 20.

(13) Kṛṣṇa feels the pangs of separation from the *gopīs*—*verse no.* 22.

Most of these verses, referred to above, tally well with the

Bhāgavata and other Vaiṣṇava works (so far as Kṛṣṇa's relation with the *gopīs*, particularly Rādhā, is concerned). It may be pointed out here that the two *Apabhraṁśa* verses on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have found place in this work.

IX. (ii) *The Prākṛt-Paiṅgala*:

According to the majority of scholars, the *Prākṛt-Paiṅgala* was composed in the 14th century A. D. (e. g., C. M. Ghosh, Jacobi, MM. H. P. Sastri, Dr. Sukumar Sen and Dr. D. C. Ganguly).[20] But, there are other scholars, viz. Drs. C. D. Gune, S. K. Chatterji and S. N. Ghoshal, who think that it was composed in or about the 15th century A. D.[21] It is, however, safe to assign it to a period, sometime between 1400 A. D.—1500 A. D. The present work is but a compilation of verses taken from various sources including the *Gāthā Saptaśatī* of Hāla and the *Karpuramañjarī* of Rājaśekhara. Curiously enough, the *Daśāvatāra-stuti* verses of Jayadeva have also found place in it. The *Prākṛt-Paiṅgala* gives us an idea about the popular religion and folklore prevalent in the 15th century A. D. It deals particularly with the 'religion of *Bhakti*.' Viṣṇu and his two important incarnations, viz. Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, are described in it. This work not only puts emphasis upon the superior strength and gallantry of Kṛṣṇa over all other gods, specially Śiva, but the most exuberant and emotional raptures of this popular god are also described. Love-romances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are beautifully depicted in it. In one of its verses the *Nau-vihāra* incident of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (cf. *Naukā-khaṇḍa* or *Jala-krīḍā*) has been described (cf. *Ārere vāhahi Kānha nāve* &c. *Mātrāvṛttam*). Rādhā is seen there as requesting Kṛṣṇa to save the boat from its watery grave with the promise to give him the desired object in return.

The Prākṛt verses of this work have much in common with the Vaiṣṇava *padas* of later times (cf. *phulla niva bhāma diṭṭha mahā jale sāmala &c.—Varṇāvṛttam, v. 81*). Influence of the *Gītagovinda* on this work is also perceptible. For

example, two stanzas, viz. 207 and 215, may be taken into account for this purpose.

B. *Medieval Bengali Literature*

With the establishment of a stable government in Bengal under the Pāṭhāns or Ābbāsides, there was a sort of renaissance of Brāhmanical culture in matters of religion and literature in Bengal. With the revival of Sanskrit studies in Bengal, there was also an attempt to enrich the vernacular literature. During the transition from Proto-Bengali or Old Bengali to Middle Bengali, no authentic specimen of literature was produced. The first great work in Old Bengali after the *Caryāpadas* was the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa. Free translations of the Sanskrit epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, as well as of some *purāṇas* like the *Bhāgavata*, for the benefit of the people, were encouraged. In addition to the free translations, stress was given to produce various *maṅgala kāvyas* and *padāvalī*. Kṛttivāsa Ojhā was the first great poet of Middle Bengali Literature. In the beginning of the 15th century A.D., he brought out an independent and free translation of the Skt. *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Vālmikī*. In the Bengali adaptation of the Skt. *Rāmāyaṇa*, we have a gentle and compassionate incarnation of a living deity to whom the loving faith of a simple people could easily reach. But, it must be borne in mind that the work of Kṛttivāsa is not entirely saturated with the spirit of *Bhakti*—so common a feature of the next century after the advent of Śrīcaitanya. The Kṛṣṇa legend was similarly taken up by Mālādhara Vasu (1473 A.D.) in his *Śrīkṛsṇa-vijaya*, based upon the *Bhāgavata*. Though, the spirit of the post-Caitanya *Bhakti*—an abundant faith in Kṛṣṇa as god incarnate—is not firmly established in this work, yet it is true that the *aiśvarya* aspect of Śrīkṛṣṇa—the *Prāṇanātha*—has been described with an intense sense of devotion. He along with Jayadeva and *Baḍu* Caṇḍidāsa laid the foundation of the theory of the 'Kānta-bhāva', which Caitanyadeva elaborated in his works and ideals.

An important feature of the Middle Bengali literature is the *padāvalī* songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Possibly, stories connected with the exploits of Kṛṣṇa as well as his amours with the *gopīs* (specially Rādhā) were popular in Bengal from an early period. Indeed, generations after generations, both Vaiṣṇavas and non-Vaiṣṇavas have taken delight in the incidents of the early life of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. No other province of India took Kṛṣṇa so close to its heart, or produced such beautiful poems about him, as Bengal did. So, it is natural that the epic and *purāṇic* stories, relating to Kṛṣṇa, would easily catch the imagination of the devout people of medieval Bengal, who were longing for an emotional discharge of devotion to their 'loving contemplation of a benign and blissful personal god'.

Many *Kṛṣṇaite kāvyas* or *pāñcālīs* were written in the medieval age. They were of two varieties:—(a) Some were based on the activities of Kṛṣṇa in the Vraja, as done in the devotional works like the *Bhāgavata* ; while, (b) others had their origin in the non-*paurāṇic pāñcālīs*, relating to the *Vrajalīlā*. These *kāvyas* or *pāñcālīs* were very popular in Bengal. The earliest specimen of group (a) is *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, composed by Mālādhara Vasu (c. 15th century A.D.)[22] alias Guṇarāja Khān (conferred upon him by Ruknuddīn Bārbak Shāh, king of Gauḍa ; according to some, by Ālauddīn Mujāffar Hussain Shāh, who flourished sometime between the 4th qr. of the 15th century and 1st qr. of the 16th century A.D.). Reference may be made here of the already noted *Haricarita-kāvyam* (relating to *Kṛṣṇa-līlā*) composed in Sanskrit in the latter half of the 15th century A.D. by a *Rāḍhīya* Brāhmin, Caturbhuja by name. The *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa falls under line of group (b).[23] It was most probably composed in the first half of the 15th century A.D.

I. *Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa and his Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*

It has been already pointed out that the *Kṛṣṇaite kāvyas* or *pāñcālīs* were popular among the people in Bengal, long

before the composition of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. The dramatic excellence of this work cannot be the maiden production of the Bengali language.

There are two types of Vaiṣṇava literature describing (a) episodes connected with the *Bhakti cult* of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* and (b) folk-songs having little or no connection with the *purāṇas* and based on local and traditional accounts. A compromise between these two traditions were made in the age of Caitanya. No artificiality is to be noticed in the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. It is remarkable for its rugged simplicity. From both literary and linguistic points of view, the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* ranks above all other works of the medieval period. The present MS. (i. e., the *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat MS.*) of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is an incomplete one. It has neither any beginning nor any end, for the required leaves are missing. So, we cannot be sure about the title of the work. However, the title *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* was given by its learned editor, Basantarañjan Roy Vidvatvallabha. The work, on its publication, was at once hailed as one belonging to 14th century A. D. (1380 A. D.). The script of this work is apparently old. But recently, some competent palaeographists have expressed doubts as regards its earlier date. They think that the work may come down to 1525 A. D.

Different theories regarding the date of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa have been advocated by scholars. They are as follows :—

(a) R. D. Banerji and Basantaranjan Roy—not later than the 14th century A. D. (*cir.* 1380 A. D.). N. K. Bhattasali has supported this view.

(b) S. K. Chatterji and Harekrishna Mukherjee—A. D. 1400 to 1415.

(c) S. N. Chakraverty—*circa* 15th century A. D.

(d) Sukumar Sen—*circa* 16th century A. D. or later.

(e) Jogesh Chandra Roy Vidyānidhi—1550 A. D. (according to this scholar, the present work was not written by a single poet, but two or more poets tried their hands in it).[24]

According to Messrs. S. K. Chatterji and Harekrishna Mukherjee, the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, though copied in the second half of the 15th century A. D., was possibly written at an earlier period. From a study of the above, it follows that many a scholar ascribe it to the 15th century A. D.

The discovery of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* has thrown new light on the authorship of a large number of the Vaiṣṇava *padas* bearing the name of Caṇḍīdāsa in their *bhaṇītās*. It is now fairly certain that there were two, or possibly more authors, bearing the name Caṇḍīdāsa. Caṇḍīdāsa of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is supposed to have flourished before Śrīcaitanya, and described himself in the *bhanitās* of this work as *Baḍu*, and a worshipper of Vāsalī. Though, his name generally appears in these *bhanitās* as 'Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa,' on a few occasions, it appears as 'Ananta Baḍu Caṇḍīdāsa.' Ananta does not at all fit in with the rest of the name, and no satisfactory explanation can be given to it. However, in our opinion the earliest (or the original) of these Caṇḍīdāsas bore the title 'Baḍu', and belonged to the pre-Caitanya times. He was the author of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. *Dīna* Caṇḍīdāsa is supposed to have lived in the post-Caitanya age, and to have been the author of the majority of the *padas*. There is a tradition current in Bengal, that Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati met each other. There are many scholars, who think that this tradition does not refer to a meeting of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa and the Maithili poet Vidyāpati, but to a meeting of *Dīna* Caṇḍīdāsa and the Bengalee poet *Kavirañjan*, known as the *Choto* Vidyāpati.

In the opinion of Dr. S. K. Chatterji, some beautiful *padas*, composed by the ordinary *kīrttanīyās* and the anonymous poets in the style of *Baḍu* and other pre-Caitanya *padakartās*, were attributed to Caṇḍīdāsa in general, and in course of time infiltrated into the works of *Dīna* and *Baḍu*.[25] Caṇḍīdāsa, who bore the title '*Dīna*', must have flourished in the post-Caitanya period. *Dīna* Caṇḍīdāsa was possibly an inhabitant of the village of Chātnā in the district of

Bāṅkura.[26] It is said that *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa lived at Nānur in the district of Birbhum.[27] As the *padas* of *Dīna* (or *Dvija*) Caṇḍīdāsa are very popular in Bengal, it is but natural that by Caṇḍīdāsa people would mean only *Dīna* Caṇḍīdāsa. Before the discovery of the MS. of the *Srikṛṣṇakīrttana* people had no knowledge about *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa, who certainly flourished before Caitanya.

Though, there are considerable divergences—real or apparent—in matters of style, language and ideas between the *padāvalī* and the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, the question arises whether the author of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is identical with that of the *padāvalī*. Whatever may be the answer to this question, there cannot be any doubt about the antiquity and genuineness of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. It has been generally assigned by scholars to the end of the 14th century A.D. But, there are some scholars who would give it a later date. For example, Dr. Sukumar Sen observes that "though barring the *Caryāpadas*, it is the oldest known specimen of Bengali, there is nothing in it that can preclude its dating in the latter half of the sixteenth or the first half of the next".[28]

It is now necessary to examine the appositeness of Dr. Sen's observations. References to Caṇḍīdāsa have been made in the following works: —

(1) *Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī* (*X. 133. 26*)—a commentary on the *Bhāgavata* by Sanātana Gosvāmī (date 1554 A.D.).

(2) *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (II. 2 etc.)—a biography of Śrīcaitanya by Kavirāja Gosvāmī (date 1581 A.D.). In this context we like to refer to a *Caryāpada*, viz. *Āpana māsa harinā vairi*, which may be taken as the source of two other similar *padas* of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. They are as follows: —

(a) *Yena vaner harinī la nija māse jagater vairi etc.*, and

(b) *Āpanar māse harinī jagater vairi.*

So, it may be observed here that save and except the *Caryāpadas*, the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa is by far the oldest known work in Bengali literature.

From a study of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, it is clear that Śrīcaitanya loved to enjoy and appreciate the poems composed by Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdāsa, Vidyāpati and Rāi Rāmānanda. This Caṇḍīdāsa was probably no other than our *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa. Moreover, the order of names in the *Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī-ṭīkā* shows that Caṇḍīdāsa flourished after Jayadeva but before Vidyāpati, i.e. roughly speaking in the 15th century A.D. It is our opinion that it was *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa who composed the *khaṇḍas* (rather *pālās*) on the *Dāna* and *Naukā* episodes. *Dīna* Caṇḍīdāsa did not write any such *khaṇḍa*. But, in the opinion of Prof. S. P. Chakravarty, the Caṇḍīdāsa of the *Vaisṇavatoṣaṇī-ṭīkā* was not *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa, but a different poet; for by Caṇḍīdāsa, an erudite Sanskrit scholar like Sanātana Gosvāmī—did not mean *Baḍu*—a vernacular poet.[29] Dr. Sukumar Sen also did not find anything in the above reference, which could make Caṇḍīdāsa a 'vernacular poet'. He then tried to show that the episodes referred to in it were not taken from the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. So, he came to the conclusion that like Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdāsa too, wrote in Sanskrit.[30] But, was there anything, which could prevent him from writing Sanskrit verses in spite of his being a 'vernacular poet'? The answer will be in the negative.

Now, let us see, in which works the *Naukā* and other similar episodes occur. The *Padyāvalī* of Rūpa Gosvāmī contains 13 verses on the *Naukā* episode. This episode forms the subject-matter of some lyrics of Suradās (*circa* 1550 A.D.); it also occurs in the *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala* of Mādhavācārya, in the *Govinda-maṅgala* of Shyāmadāsa and in the lyric-poems of many Vaiṣṇava poets of the 16th and the 17th century A.D. (cf. *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala* of Kṛṣṇadāsa).[31] Next, comes the *Dāna* episode. We know that Rūpa Gosvāmī wrote a *bhāṇikā* on this particular episode, known as *Dāna-keli-kaumudī*.[32] According to this work, the incident of *Dānalīlā* occurred when Rādhā was proceeding towards 'Govindakuṇḍa' in order to give Kṛṣṇa the *Haiaṅgavīna*. But, the theme of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa differs essentially from this work, inasmuchas

it says that Kṛṣṇa demanded *dāna* from Rādhā while she was proceeding towards Mathurā for the purpose of selling curd, ghee etc. This episode has not been included in the work of Mālādhara Vasu (as is evident from two of its MSS.), because the *Bhāgavata*, his source book, did not refer to it. But strangely enough, two other MSS., Nos. 68 and 3223, contain references to it. It may be a case of later interpolation. Mādhava Bhaṭṭa too wrote a poem on this subject styled *Dāna-līlā-kāvya*.[33] Poems of Caṇḍīdāsa have been included in an anthological works called *Padakalpataru*.[34] But, other works of the similar nature like *Kṣaṇadā-gīta-cintāmaṇi*[35] and *Saṁkīrttanāmṛta*,[35a] do not contain any such poem of this poet. Dr. S. Sen thinks that the mention of the above episode in the *Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇīṭīkā* does not necessarily prove that they were taken from the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*.[36] In this connection, he has drawn the attention of scholars to a Sanskrit work called *Premāmṛta* (also known as *Rādhā-Premāmṛta* and *Gopālacarita*) which has been variously ascribed to Caitanya, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, Viṭṭhala Dīkṣit and Mohinī Mohan Lāhiḍī. This work has four episodes, viz. *Vastraharaṇa-khaṇḍa* (or *Vasanacaurya-khaṇḍa*), *Bhārakhaṇḍa*, *Naukā-khaṇḍa* and *Dāna-khaṇḍa*. The *Bhāralīlā* episode has been described in the *Gopālacampū* of Jīva Gosvāmī. The *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* and *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala* also agree to it to a remarkable extent. Order of episodes in these three works is as follows:—

(a) *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* and *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala*—*Dāna*, *Naukā* and *Bhāra khaṇḍas*;

(b) *Premāmṛta*—*Bhāra*, *Naukā* and *Dāna khaṇḍas*.

As regards the observations of S. Sen, that the episodes referred to in the *Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī ṭīkā* were not taken from the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa who was a 'vernacular poet,' we would like to say that there was nothing in it which could prevent him from becoming a 'vernacular poet.'[37] It appears from the study of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* that its author had a considerable knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature.

The Sanskrit verses of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, numbering about 125, act as prelude to the vernacular *padas*. However, it is very difficult to say whether, the Sanskrit verses, interspersed in between the vernacular poems (rather songs) of this work, were composed by *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa, or they were simply quoted from other works extant in his time. Whatever the case may be, one should pay unqualified tributes to the composer of these beautiful and well-knit Sanskrit verses. They can easily form the nucleus of a minor *kāvya*, the aim of which was probably to describe the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Had he not composed even a single vernacular verse besides these Sanskrit ones, he would have easily earned the reputation of a great poet!

As the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is more or less a *pāñcālī* (rather a *pālā-kīrttana*), it may be suggested here that these Sanskrit verses were composed for the purpose of being recited before the audience. They gave the audience an idea about the forthcoming events beforehand (something like the *ākhara* of the *kīrttanīyās*).

In the opinion of some scholars, the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is to some extent an imitation of the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva.[38] There is no way denying that *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa was well-acquainted with the work of Jayadeva, for more than one of his *padas* are but exact translations from it. So far as the classification of verses is concerned, the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* follows the *Gītagovinda*, and not works like *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. As many as five songs of Jayadeva have been translated 'ad verbatim' and have been included in the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, while the substance of Jayadeva's famous *Daśāvatāra stotra* has been given in one *pada* with a slight variation. In order to illustrate this point, lines from each of these two works may be quoted here:—

(a) *Tor rati āsoāse gelā abhisāra* etc. (*Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, p. 79) (*S. K. K.*) (cf. *Ratisukhasāre gamanābhisāre* etc., *Gītagovinda*, V, I. 8) (*G. G.*);

(b) *Ki mor yauvana-dhane la Baḍāyi* etc. (S. K. K., p. 138) (cf. *Kiṁ dhanena kiṁ janena kiṁ mama sukhena gṛheṇa vā* etc. *G. G., III. 4*); and

(c) *Nindase cāṅda candana Rādhā* etc. (*S. K. K.*, p. 149) (cf. *Nindati candanamindukiraṇaṁ* etc. (*G. G., IV.* 2).[38]

It may be pointed out here that though, the latter work is written in the model of a lyric-drama, interspersed with interlocutions, it does not excel in dramatic quality. According to some, it is more an epic than a regular drama.[39] But it may be observed that it is more or less a popular *yātrā*, for it has apparently no epic quality. It has some characteristics of a popular *yātrā*, if not of a regular drama. However, from a comparative study of the above two works, it appears that Caṇḍīdāsa was greatly influenced by Jayadeva, and that the work of the former represents one phase of the development of pre-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. It is also clear that Caṇḍīdāsa, like Jayadeva, was proficient in music, and all his songs bear the name of the *rāgas*, in which they are to be sung. From his borrowals from Jayadeva as well as from the observations of the biographers of Śrī Caitanya, we may infer that *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa was later than Jayadeva, but certainly earlier than Caitanyadeva. Though *Baḍu* was influenced by Jayadeva, he did not follow him blindly. He innovated new sequences in the love-romances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. There are many episodes in the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, which are not found in the classical sources of Kṛṣṇa's life, such as, the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Harivaṁśa* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, and were probably derived from local folklore. Hence, it appears that *Baḍu*, instead of following the *Bhāgavata* or the *Gītagovinda*, 'gave literary form to the tradition which might have been popular in his locality; or he might have recorded a modified version of an old myth. Apparently, it was felt that since Rādhā was no other than Lakṣmī, all subsequent lapses needed no apology. But, why does Lakṣmī (Rādhā) marry Āihana instead of marrying Kṛṣṇa? Since the days of Nimbārka, Rādhā had been described as a daughter of

Vṛṣabhānu; but, according to Baḍu, Sāgara was the father of Rādhā.' It is a unique deviation, indeed.[40] It is interesting to note here that Candrāvalī according to *Baḍu* was but another name of Rādhā. In later Vaiṣṇava literature, however, Candrāvalī has been described as a rival of Rādhā.

Another innovation of Baḍu is the identification of Rādhā with Lakṣmī. It seems that he was indebted to Jayadeva for this identification. Though, the latter took them, i. e. Rādhā and Lakṣmī, as two distinct entities, there are no doubt traces in his work which establish their identity.

There is a remarkable similarity between *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa and the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* of Mālādhara Vasu. Dr. Sukumar Sen has given as many as 168 illustrations in order to prove the same. Sometimes, a whole sentence has been reproduced in the latter work with a slight change.[41] For example, two verses from each of the above two works may be quoted here:—

(a) *Āpana ciṅhiyā (Rādhā) vasi deha more* (*S.K.K.*, p. 319) (cf. *Āpana ciṅhiyā deha vastra-alaṁkāra—Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, abbv., *S.K.V*, p. 33);

(b) *Kena vidhi āga Baḍāyi lekhilo kapāle* (*S.K.K.*, p. 319) (cf. *Hari Hari kinā vidhi likhilā kapāle—S.K.V.*, p. 47).

It is clear that Mālādhara Vasu was aware of the existence of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*. It is an important clue in determining the date of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa. So, it is obvious that *Baḍu* flourished sometime after Jayadeva, but certainly before Mālādhara Vasu (A.D. 1473-1480), i.e. in or about the middle of the 15th century A.D. The language of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* tallies well with those of Vidyāpati, Mādhavācārya, Śaṅkaradeva, Jagannātha Dāsa, Kṛttivāsa Ojhā, Mālādhara Vasu and Vṛindābana Dāsa.

It has been elsewhere observed that the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* is more or less a lyric drama. There are in all three characters in it, viz Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Baḍāyi (it may be pointed out here that the semi-divine character of Paurṇamāsī, very much

alike Baḍāyi, was introduced earlier than the 16th century A.D.; Baḍāyi has been mentioned in the works like the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala* and *Govindamaṅgala*); and all of them have been beautifully drawn by its author.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* describes the *Vrajalīlā* of Kṛṣṇa. It is a sort of *vijaya-kāvya* and describes Kṛṣṇa's triumph over Rādhā (in love affairs). It has 13 sections or *khaṇḍas*, viz. *Janmakhaṇḍa*, *Tāmbula-khaṇḍa*, *Dāna-khaṇḍa*, *Naukā-khaṇḍa*, *Bhāra-khaṇḍa*, *Chatra-khaṇḍa*, *Vṛndāvana-khaṇḍa*, *Kāliyadamana-khaṇḍa*, *Hāra-khaṇḍa*, *Vanakhaṇḍa*, *Vaṁśī-khaṇḍa*, and *Rādhāviraha-(khaṇḍa)*. In the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, the *padas* are arranged in sections which relate to the particular episodes in the erotic careers of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and they have titles like *Janma-khaṇḍa* and so forth.

In the beginning of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, it is said that the gods went to lord Nārāyaṇa and begged him of destroying Kaṁsa. The lord gave them two hairs—one of which was born as Kṛṣṇa, and the other as Balarāma. The gods went next to Lakṣmī and besought her to be born as Rādhā, so that Kṛṣṇa might have a companion in his earthly existence. Hence, Lakṣmī took her birth as Rādhā—her parents being Sāgara and Kālinī and was married to Āihana, the brother of Yaśodā. So, Rādhā being the aunt of Kṛṣṇa, spurned for a long time the overtures of Kṛṣṇa. Even when the latter revealed his true identity, Rādhā hesitated to believe him. But in the long run, she yielded to Kṛṣṇa through the instrumentality of Baḍāyi. Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are described in this work as teenagers—Rādhā barely eleven and Kṛṣṇa a bit older. Rādhā has been constantly referred here as Candrāvalī.

Though, the name of this work is *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, Kṛṣṇa's character has not been delineated here in a praiseworthy manner. The Kṛṣṇa of this work is utterly unscrupulous and seduces Rādhā with the cunning and credulity of a village lout. The poem! disarms criticism with the primitive rusticity

of the life it depicts and with the frankness, but at the same time, the unconsciousness of its sensuality. The faults of the poems are also redeemed by Rādhās' character. As an adolescent young girl, she is a remarkable creation for that age. She retains her naturalness and integrity of character throughout the poem—both in the earlier part, where she resists Kṛṣṇa's overtures ; and in the latter part, where she loves Kṛṣṇa with her whole body and soul. The Rādhā of this poem is a real woman, and not the sentimental and emotional abstraction that she often became in the Vaiṣṇava poetry of the post-Caitanya age. The Kṛṣṇa of this poem, too, is real—having stepped directly out of the contemporary life. He is the 'rustic Kṛṣṇa' of the pre-Caitanya Bengal—an anthropomorphic god, if there was one—the crude mental attitude of which the post-Caitanya Vaiṣṇava poets refined and wrought into an image of perfection.

Baḍu has probably tried to show that at times—when God is within the easy reach of his devotee, or when He comes to His devotee on His own accord—the latter does not always recognise Him. Or, it may be that communion with God is not so easy—one shall have to undergo many trials and tribulations in order to get Him. Baḍāyi, one of the main characters of this work, may be described as a go-between or conciliator in the endeavour of Rādhā in getting Kṛṣṇa, the God of gods. According to some, she is no better than a procuress.[43]

In the *Vaṁśīkhaṇḍa* section of his *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, *Baḍu* has described the deep yearning of a devotee for his lord (in this case Kṛṣṇa). None can disobey the eternal clarion-call of Kṛṣṇa, transmitted through the flute. He or she will have to forget all temporal pleasures and respond to it. Here, too, we see that Rādhā cannot sit idle when Kṛṣṇa invites her in the *Rāsa*-dance. Rādhā's deep yearning for Kṛṣṇa led her to surrender herself before the latter, and this no doubt enabled her to get the desired object.

We have shown elsewhere that Caṇḍīdāsa (*Baḍu*) and his works were known to Caitanyadeva and Sanātana Gosvāmī. Now, the question arises why did this old and once famous work like *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* fall into oblivion in later times ? It is said that the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* belonged to the post-Caitanya period, for not a single verse of it has been quoted in a work assignable to an earlier date and no female or male friend of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa have been mentioned. In criticising this view, Manīndra Mohan Vasu has rightly observed that had there been any influence of Caitanyaism over this work, it could not have been the product of the pre-Caitanya times.[43] References to the male and female friends of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā respectively should not be expected from a work of the pre-Caitanya period. But, even admitting the view of Mr. M. N. Vasu we must say that the verses from the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* are conspicuous by their absence in the works of the Caitanya period. There are some scholars like Drs. B. B. Majumdar and S. B. Das Gupta, who think that the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* contains some direct references to the advent of Śrīcaitanya, viz. (a)......*tavāsi cāiha giā Bhāgīrathī kule*// and (b)......*tave śudhi pāive yathā vase Jagannāthe* ; and hence, it should be treated as a product of the post-Caitanya age.[44] Words '*Bhāgīrathīkule*' and '*Jagannāthe*', according to them, may refer to the *Ādilīlā* as well as the *Antyalīlā* of Śrīcaitanya at Navadvīpa and Jagannāthadhāma-Purī respectively. But, mere mention of these two words cannot conclusively prove their connection with Śrīcaitanya. It may be pointed out in this connection that the eternal desire of a pious Hindu is to spend his last days (rather to die) on the bank of the Bhāgīrathī river, i.e., the Ganges.

From a study of the *Pavanadūtam* of Dhoyī, it is clear that Rāma (*Raghu-kula-guru*) was worshipped on the bank of the *Bhāgīrathī* river (v. 30). Villages like Rāmakeli and Kulīnagrāma were chief centres of Brāhmanical culture (vide, *Act IV, p. 137* of *Prabodha-candrodaya*). Many Vaiṣṇava saints and poets of both pre- and post-Caitanya periods used

to live in these villages. Close association of Jayadeva with the temple of Jagannātha at Purī proves it beyond doubt that the people of Bengal used to make pilgrimages to that place even in the medieval times. So, it is not at all surprising that *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa would refer to lord Jagannātha and his temple. Śrīcaitanya's "*nimeṣeṇa yugāyitam*" and "*cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam*" are but Sanskrit renderings of *Baḍu's* "*eka kula yuga bhāye*............" and "*.........jhare megha variṣe jehña jharae nayaner pānī.*" Dr. S. B. Das Gupta has tried to prove that something of Caitanyaism was anticipated in the Bengali literature of the pre-Caitanya period.

We have tried to show that as the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* was not at all influenced by the Caitanyaite ideals, the ideas and beliefs expressed in this work did not tally well with those of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Dr. S. Sen has rightly observed that 'Between this state of the Kṛṣṇa legend in the pre-Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism and its exalted and sublimated position in Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism there was an immense gulf.'[45] The bridging of this gulf began just a generation before Caitanyadeva's advent. Like most poets of the pre-Caitanya period *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa has put more emphasis on the *aiśvarya* aspect of the theme than upon the *mādhurya* (aspect) which became predominant in later poems through the teachings of Caitanyadeva. In the *Padāvalī* literature the dominant note is *mādhurya*. In the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, the Rādhā of the earlier *khaṇḍas* like *Dāna*, *Tāmbula* and *Naukā* is different from the Rādhā of the later *khaṇḍas* like *Vṛndāvana* and *Rādhāviraha.*[a] Indeed, a development of the character of Rādhā can be noticed in the later *khaṇḍas*. The Rādhā of the later-day *Padāvalī* literature is anticipated here. All these no doubt prove the early age of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*.

But, what is the reason behind the fact that the work was more or less forgotten at a subsequent period? It may be due to these two *khaṇḍas*, viz. *Dāna* and *Naukā*. Kṛṣṇa is no doubt a perfect incarnation of Viṣṇu (as described in the

present work), but one cannot support his crude overtures to Rādhā, his aunt-in-law. This might have been at the root of its subsequent unpopularity. There are other reasons, too. According to a local myth, which might have been current at the time of *Baḍu*, Rādhā was considered as a simple milk-woman (the daughter of the milk-man, Sāgara). It is the compassion of Kṛṣṇa that made her a blessed damsel. She owed her prominence to Kṛṣṇa. But, the position of Rādhā became much elevated at a later period, when the *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇavas rose into prominence. According to them, she was the daughter of king Vṛṣabhānu or Vṛkabhānu. It was highly derogatory on the part of a princess, who was also the lady-love of god Kṛṣṇa, to sell curd, ghee etc. at the market-place of Mathurā. So, the Vaiṣṇavas discarded the work altogether.[46] Some of the expressions, made in the *Śrīkṛṣṇa-kīrttana* in order to describe the divine sports of Kṛṣṇa, may not be pleasing to the ears; but it may be pointed out that the *purāṇas* too sometimes describe the same in a similar way. The union of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is divine, so the poets and mythologists do not feel ashamed in describing the same. However, both esoteric and erotic sentiments are present in this work.

From a study of the *Bhāgavata*, it is clear that *gopīs* used to worship goddess Kātyāyanī. But, the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas* would hardly advise any Vaiṣṇava to worship a deity not belonging to their cult. Stray reference, however, to Caṇḍī can be found in some Vaiṣṇava works. The 14th *vilāsa* of the *Premavilāsa* may be consulted for this purpose. Considering these features, Basantababu has suggested that *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa was a *Pañcopāsaka Smārta* like the great Maithila poet Vidyāpati.[47] The personal name of the poet also indicates his religious belief (for, Caṇḍīdāsa means 'a servant of goddess Caṇḍī'). Poet's association with goddess Caṇḍī have prompted some scholars to call him a devotee of the same deity. Harekrishna Mukherji has tried to prove that Vāsulī was but a variety of Caṇḍī, and that Caṇḍīdāsa was a *Vaiṣ-*

ṇava-Śākta.[48] The Bengalee Brāhmaṇas of that age, who used to mediate upon the feet of Viṣṇu, had no objection in worshipping the Śākta deities. Most probably, Caṇḍīdāsa was a Śākta; but later on he changed his religious faith for Vaiṣṇavism, though he did not necessarily change his *Iṣṭa-devatā*, Vāsulī-Caṇḍī.

The *Brahmavaivartta-purāṇa* (*Prakṛti khaṇḍa*) records that the goddess should be worshipped in the following way:—

"*Nārāyaṇa Nāradīya Maṅgalacaṇḍikopākhyānam tatstotra-kathanam mama......'Saṁgītair-narttanair-vādyair sarve Kṛṣṇa-kīrttanaiḥ*" / / (chap. 41). It follows from a study of this verse that the goddess should be invoked with songs etc., specially the *Kṛṣṇakīrttana* (song of Kṛṣṇa). According to the *Kālikā-purāṇa*, the goddess should be worshipped with this following *mantra*:—

"*Nārāyaṇāya vidmahe tvāṁ Candikāyai tu dhīmahi* / /...
.........*Vaiṣṇavī-tantramantrasya tantraṁ grāhyantu-pūjane* /
Mahāmāyā.........paripūjane/."

In worshipping the goddess Maṅgalacaṇḍī, the *Pūjā-vidhi* as prescribed by the Vaiṣṇava *tantras* and *Mahāmāyā tantra* should be followed. It is interesting to note that reference has been made to lord Nārāyaṇa in the worship of Maṅgala-caṇḍī. Maṅgalacaṇḍī may be regarded as a consort of lord Nārāyaṇa (Caṇḍī=Vaiṣṇavī ?).[49] On the basis of all this, it may be suggested that Vāsalī of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa was but a variety of Caṇḍī or Maṅgalacaṇḍī and Caṇḍīdāsa was a *tāntric* Vaiṣṇava.

Caṇḍīdāsa has been claimed by the *Sahajiyās* as one of their 'nine' *Rasika puruṣas*. Many scholars think that Caṇḍī-dāsa was a *Sahajiyā*. They believe that he belonged to the 14th century A.D.[50] There was no doubt a *Sahajiyā* Caṇḍī-dāsa (*Dīna* or *Dvija*), but he belonged to the post-Caitanya period. On the other hand *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa, the celebrated author of the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, belonged to the 14th century A.D. The *Sahajiyā* Caṇḍīdāsa did neither compose the

Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana kāvya, nor he belonged to the pre-Caitanya period. So, in this case, there is no doubt that it was *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa, who belonged to the pre-Caitanya period. We have discussed the probable date of *Baḍu* Caṇḍīdāsa. According to Manīndra Mohan Vasu, there is not a single verse in the *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana* which can prove *Baḍu's* association with the *Sahajiyā* sect.[51] In the opinion of another scholar, the Vaiṣṇava *Sahajiyā* sect was much influenced by Caitanyadeva. Most scholars are of the opinion that the Vaiṣṇava *Sahajiyā* sect came into existence in the post-Caitanya times. *Dīna* or *Dvija*-Caṇḍīdāsa was a *Sahajiyā*, and not *Baḍu*.

A comparative study of the songs of *Baḍu* and Vidyāpati will show that the latter was deeply influenced by the former. We need not quote here verses from these two works in order to prove this.

II. *Mālādhara Vasu and the Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*:

The *Bhāgavata* is more or less the '*Bible*' of the Vaiṣṇavas. This work attained such a position in the religious life of Medieval Bengal that few pious people could go without it —were they Vaiṣṇavas or the *Smārtas*, in general. So, it was but natural that this work should have been translated into vernacular languages including Bengali. Not only translations but many works also were based on the *Bhāgavata*. The authors of these works were generally Vaiṣṇavas. Mālādhara Vasu, author of the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* as well as a faithful translator of the *Bhāgavata*, was a Vaiṣṇava. In rendering the *Canto X* of the *Bhāgavata* into the Bengali language, the poet shows some predilections, which speak of his love for Vaiṣṇavism. It is not difficult to see how the method of 'congregational singing of the name of the lord'—on which Śrīcaitanya laid so much emphasis for the people of the *Kali* age—was eulogised even by his predecessor, Mālādhara Vasu. It is not unlikely that the former might have drawn some inspiration from the latter who flourished immediately before him. In the opinion of Śrīcaitanya there was no better

treasure in the *Kali* age than the *Bhāgavata*, and it should be read and re-read with a view to crossing 'the sea of existence'.[52]

Mālādhara Vasu has been generally accepted as one of the precursors of Caitanya. Two types of Kṛṣṇaite *kāvyas*, one describing the *aiśvarya* and *bhagavattā* of the lord, and the other the erotico-religious sentiment pertaining to the *Vṛndāvana-līlā* of the divine pair, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, were composed in the pre-Caitanya times. Mālādhara, who followed the first type, has described the *aiśvarya* aspect of the Lord. But, he was not the first poet to deal with works like the *Bhāgavata*, for, before him many other poets tried their hands in them. Mention should be made here of Kṛttivāsa, who brought out a free translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Like his predecessors, Mālādhara too, chiefly dwells upon the divine activities of Kṛṣṇa. But strangely enough, he does not give much emphasis on Rādhā. There are but scanty references to Rādhā in his work. One may point out here that another work, believed to be a product of the pre-Caitanya age, comes from the pen of Yaśorāja Khān, an inhabitant of Śrīkhaṇḍa. He composed some really beautiful poems on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In spite of this, his work was not much appreciated by the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas*. Moreover, the people of Śrīkhaṇḍa did not know much about it till the 1st half of the 17th century A.D. But surprisingly enough, the other important work of the same age, i.e., the *Śrīkṛṇavijaya*, received significant encomium even from Caitanyadeva, the pivot of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.

Mālādhara, a true Vaiṣṇava, composed the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* 'kāvya' sometime between 1395-1402 Śaka (1473-1480 A.D.). The date of the composition of this *kāvya* has been given in one of the *bhanitās*. His work is but a translation of the *Bhāgavata*—its first Bengali translation. But, it was not the intention of Mālādhara to follow the original in toto; in some places, he deviated from it. The name of this poem indicates that its main purpose is to describe the character of Kṛṣṇa.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* is a '*vijayakāvya*', in so far as it represents Kṛṣṇa as smiting down his adversary Kaṁsa and as performing other feats of heroism. It further emphasizes that the lover Kṛṣṇa was a great hero, the fact, which is not so much emphasized in the *Bhāgavata*. After him, began the process of spiritualisation of Kṛṣṇa's character, which was completed by the later Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. As a result, Kṛṣṇa was entirely divested of his heroic character and in the long run was transformed into a pure figure of love. The appearance of Rādhā as Kṛṣṇa's beloved in the poem of Mālādhara may be said, however, to indicate the beginning of this transformation.

As it was the intention of Mālādhara to popularize the *Bhāgavata* account of Kṛṣṇa's life in Bengal, all main events concerning the *līlā* of the god were touched upon in his work. He did not blindly follow the original. Some of the *Bhāgavata* verses were touched by his imagination. The *Śrīkṛṣṇnvijaya* (of Mālādhara) begins with an invocation to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and is followed by an obeisance to Nārāyaṇa. The *Rāsalīlā*, as described in this work, does not tally with that described by the Vaiṣṇava poets of the post-Caitanya times. The immense popularity of this Bengali translation of the *Bhāgavata* in Bengal indicates the religious tendency of the local people of the age (for a comparative study of the *Bhāgavata* and the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, see Prof. K. N. Mitra's edn. of the latter work).[53]

The *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* occupies an important place in the history of the development of the Bengali literature. It is the first work on 'the Kṛṣṇa cult' in Bengal. It gives us some glimpses of the real nature of Vaiṣṇavism prevalent in the pre-Caitanya times. It also gives us an idea of the manners and customs of the people of that age. Like other early or contemporary works, viz. the *Gītagovinda* and *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrttana*, the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, too, chooses as its subject the love-romance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* is more or less a *pāñcālī*.[54] The poet begins his work with the intention of describing the *Kṛṣṇalīlā* in a popular way, and chooses as its medium an easily intelligible language. The chief business of Mālādhara was to describe the glories of Kṛṣṇa through *Vrajalīlā*, and he described the same in his work. He wrote this work in order to establish the theory that Kṛṣṇa Himself was the Supreme Being (cf. *Paratattva*), and this was quite in fitting with the Vaiṣṇava theology of that time. The *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas* think that Śrīkṛṣṇa Himself is God (cf. *Śrīkṛṣṇastu Bhagavān Svayaṁ*). This characteristic trait of Vaiṣṇavism was, however, preached at a later period. According to Mādhavācārya, Hari Himself is the Supreme Object. In the opinion of Khagendra Nath Mitra, Mādhavācārya was influenced by Mālādhara in writing his *Śrīkṛṣṇamaṅgala*.[55] While singing the glory of Kṛṣṇa, Mālādhara has not forgotten to deal with the theories of monotheism and incarnatory forms. Following the steps of the *Bhāgavata*, he too, has shown that the main reason for the 'advent' of Kṛṣṇa in this earth was to bear its burden and chastise the demons. Though theoretically, He is All-Powerful and Omnipotent, yet practically, He acts like a man.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* was read and sung in Bengal during the life time of Śrī-Caitanyadeva. The expression, '*Vasudeva-suta Kṛṣṇa mor prānanātha* (*verse 3, p. 1*) exerted a considerable influence upon Śrī-Caitanya, who moulded the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*. Śri-Caitanya had a deep regard for Mālādhara and his native village, Kulīnagrāma. It was due to the latter that Kulīnagrāma became a great centre of Vaiṣṇavism. From a close study of the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, it is clear that its author was thoroughly inspired by ardent religious feeling. Śrī-Caitanya knew it and praised it to the son of Mālādhara Vasu. He would even greet the inhabitants of Kulīnagrama by uttering the above expression with a slight variation—'*Nander nandan Kṛṣṇa mor prānanātha*.'[56] Another village which took active part in paving the way of Śrī-

Caitanya was Rāmakeli. These two villages were inhabited by many devout Vaiṣṇava poets and theologists. The Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal was centering round Kulīnagrāma. It is said that *yavana* Haridāsa, a famous Hindu convert and a follower of Śrīcaitanya, had his hermitage near this village. From a study of the Vaiṣṇavite ideas incorporated into the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*, it is clear that Kulīnagrāma was one of the chief centres of Vaiṣṇava movement in Bengal. Both Mālādhara and *yavana* Haridāsa may be described as the harbingers of *Caitanyaism* in Bengal. The Vaiṣṇava movement was gaining momentum day by day; and as a result of this, saints like Haridāsa and poets like Mālādhara came into prominence.

The *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* was also known as the *Govindavijaya*. In the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* the work has been mentioned as the *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya*.[57] Śrikṛṣṇa and Govinda are but different names of Lord Kṛṣṇa. But, the question is why it has been styled *Śrīkṛṣṇavijaya* and not simply the *Bhāgavata*, even when the poet took up the task of translating the same into the vernacular language. This is probably due to the somewhat independent character of the work. The influence of the *Bhāgavata* upon the *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* was immense. The *Caitanyaites*, too, considered the *Bhagavata* as an authoritative work.

C. *Works of Vidyāpati*:

There was a close connection between Bengal and Mithilā in the Medieval times. Inscriptional evidences, specially of the time of the Senas, prove beyond any doubt that Bengal once held her sway over Mithilā and South Bihar.[58] Culturally, too, these two states (Bengal and Mithilā) were bound together. There was no dearth of Bengalee scholars in the adjacent states like Mithilā, Moraṅgadeśa and Nepāl. There had been a continuous flow of lyrics (specially the *padāvalī* songs) in these states in both pure Maithili and mixed Brajavuli languages (also in *Avahaṭṭha* language). It is not defini-

tely known whether the Brajavuli language had its origin in Mithilā or Bengal or in Nepāl.

It is said that Vidyāpati was the earliest singer of Eastern India, who raised a vernacular language to the level of a literary language. His poems were written and cultivated in a land, which was once the leader of Sanskrit learning and Hindu culture and where people from all parts of the country came to qualify themselves as scholars. He was somehow instrumental in popularizing 'the cult of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa' which was described in a peculiarly sensual manner in some of the *purāṇas*, and developed into one of the highest literary achievement in Sanskrit by Jayadeva.

Though, a first rate *Dharmaśāstra-naivandhika*, Vidyāpati's fame rests upon the Maithili *Avahaṭṭha padas*, and narrative and descriptive *kāvyas* (cf. *Kīrttilatā* and *Kīrttipatākā*). The Maithili *Avahaṭṭha* (*Apabhraṁśa*) forms a link between modern vernaculars and the Māgadhī *Prākṛt*.

It has been remarked that Bengalee scholars in that age used to go to Mithilā in order to make perfect their knowledge of *Nyāya* and *Smṛti* texts. They served as cultural links between these two neighbouring states. It may be that a Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs of Vidyāpati reached Bengal through the agency of these scholars.[59]

The sweet Sanskrit verses on the love romances of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva reached in no time to Mithilā and other states, and they became very popular there. The unparalleled melody of Jayadeva's verses were echoed a century and a half later in Vidyāpati's melliflous Maithili verses. In fact, erotic songs on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, composed by Jayadeva, were immensely popular in Mithilā. The conferring of the title of *Abhinava-Jayadeva* to Vidyāpati by the Maithili king Śiva Siṁha (cf. *Vispi copper plate grant* of this king) proves that the spirit of the great lyric-master of Bengal inspired the poet-laureate of the Maithili Court.[60]

It has been already said that the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs were popular both in Mithilā and Bengal. Maithili as well as

Bengalee poets tried their hands in this subject, i.e. the Rādhā Kṛṣṇa songs. Bengalee scholars with a poetic bend of mind began to compose songs on the model of the lyrics imported from Mithilā, which were again influenced by Jayadeva and other poets. These poets borrowed not only the metre, but also the language in which these particular songs were composed in Brajabuli. The Maithili songs were not entirely based upon the Kṛṣṇa legends. But, the spread of the Brajabuli in Bengal synchronized with the revival of the Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal, which culminated with the life of Śrīcaitanya. So, the theme of these songs modelled after the Maithili ones was solely the Kṛṣṇa legends. The currency of Brajabuli in Bengal happened sometime during the second half of the fifteenth century A. D., or in the first half of the next. The earliest Brajabuli song in Bengali literature was written by Yaśorāja Khān.

Not only Vidyāpati, but also other poets of Mithilā, wrote on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa topic. Among them mention may be made of Nandīpati, Jayānanda, Caturbhuja, Kaviśekhara, Bhañjana and Cakrapāṇi (they were, either, contemporaries of Śrīcaitanya, or flourished shortly after him).[61] The Maithili kings continued to patronise those poets, who sang devotional songs on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the vernacular language and whose were current upto quite recent times.

Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen has tried to prove that the real home of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa love-lyrics was Bengal.[62] In the opinion of this scholar, the people of Mithilā did not truly appreciate these songs as keenly as the Bengalee did. The songs of Vaiṣṇava poets of Bengal voice the mystical yearnings of the soul for its beloved, not always in the highly strained metaphorical language of the lyrics. In Bengal, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs were of an indigenous character and had been appreciated and loved in the cities and villages alike, long before the advent of Śrīcaitanya. New tunes and modes of music were invented in particular epochs and improved

upon in succeeding generations in order to sing these songs with effect. The extensive popularity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs of Vidyāpati in Bengal was largely due to Caitanyadeva, who used to appreciate and sing them.[63] This great man made the songs of Vidyāpati very popular among his followers. Along with these songs the Maithili language, too, gained great popularity in Bengal. In course of time Vidyāpati's songs became prayer hymns—*Vaiṣṇava-bhajanas* or *kīrttana* songs. As a result of it, the poet himself was taken into the Vaiṣṇava fold. Songs of Vidyāpati were so popular in Bengal that some people went to the length of saying that the poet was born in that region. This belief had been so strong that scholars like Beames would observe that Vidyāpati was a native of Bengal, and that his name was Basanta Rāi —a scion of the family of Bhavānanda Rāi.[64] As the songs of Vidyāpati quickly gained popularity in Bengal, it may be remarked that he was as much a Bengalee poet as he was a Maithili one. His language developed a special style for the expression of that particular attitude and emotion which Vaiṣṇavism represents. As a result of it, a considerable number of his poems lost their original Maithili character and wore a Bengali garb. Probably, the intention of Vidyāpati was to write poems in a language which could be easily understood by the people of these two states.[65] Vaiṣṇavism had been gaining ground in Bengal long before the advent of Jayadeva. So, it is but natural that the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs would acclaim wide popularity in Bengal. These Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa songs were more popular in Bengal than in Mithilā, the home province of Vidyāpati.[66] The *padāvalī* of Vidyāpati took by storm the heart of Bengal, and they were largely imitated by the Bengali poets.

The upper and lower limits of birth-dates of Vidyāpati are respectively 1347 A.D. and 1390 A.D., and upper and lower limits of death-dates are respectively 1408 A.D. and 1500 A.D. In the first case, there is a difference of 43 years, and in the second case, the difference is of 52 years.[67]

After taking into consideration all these different dates of birth and death of the poet it may be observed that Vidyāpati was roughly 100 years of age at the time of his death. He probably flourished sometime between the middle of the 14th century A. D. and the end of the 15th century A.D. We need not enter here into a detailed discussion about the date of this poet.

Vidyapati's name has come down to us in connection with the Maithili songs, such as *Kīrttilatā*, *Kīrttipatākā* and specially the anthology of *padāvalī* songs that stirred up the later Vaiṣṇava writers and preachers of Bengal.[68] He also wrote books on *Smṛi*, *Nīti* (moral tales) & *Pūjā*. From a study of the *padāvalī* songs, composed by Vidyāpati, it is clear that he wrote songs in praise of deities like Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Gaṅgā, Gaṇeśa and Śakti. His songs also prove that he did not see any difference between the two gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu—one was not different from the other. Later, Brahmā was also associated with the two.

Scholars are not of uniform opinion as regards the religious belief of Vidyāpati. Thus, while some would regard him as a Vaiṣṇava; others, consider him as a Śaiva. There is also a tendency among scholars to prove his non-sectarian attitude. In his writings he is found expressing his veneration to more than one deity; sometimes, Durgā is the supreme goddess, sometimes, Śiva is the most powerful god, while in the number of other verses he praises Viṣṇu. Following deities are invoked in his works:—

(a) Ādyāśakti— *Puruṣaparīkṣā*.
(b) Gaṇeśa — *Likhanāvalī*.
(c) Durgā — *Durgābhakti-taraṅgiṇī*.
(d) Viṣṇu — *Dānavākyāvalī*.
(e) Śiva — *Śaivasarvvasvasāra*.
(f) Brahmā — *Vibhāgasāra*, and
(g) -do- — *Gaṅgāvākyāvalī*.

The view, that Vidyāpati was a devotee of five gods (*Pañcopāsaka Smārta*), was advocated by MM. H. P. Sastri

in his edition of *Kīrttilatā*.[69] Jayakanta Misra also seems to subscribe to this view. It is true that in Mithilā the five gods, i.e. Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Durgā, and Śiva, are jointly worshipped in any form of worship. Such a joint worship marks the beginning of a prayer. Even at the time of special worship of any of these five deities, all of them are jointly worshipped. But, it is to be noted in this connection that in Mithilā nobody is found worshipping these five special deities.[70] Extant 'liturgical texts' also, do not subscribe to such a view. Not a single passage of Vidyāpati, written particularly on the joint worship of these deities, can be found. Moreover, the poet has not composed any verse in honour of Sūrya. Still, it will be presently shown, that the great Maithili poet held eclectic religious views and might be described as a *Pañcopāsaka Smārta*.

In order to know the true meaning of the term *Pañcopāsaka Smārta*, we should discuss here the religious trend of the medieval times in both Mithilā and Bengal. J. N. Banerjea, while dealing with the syncretic icons has observed: "The general trend of the guidance given in the Smṛtisāstras for the proper control and regulation of the lives of the sectarian Indians was also an important factor in encouraging this feeling among the different groups of these worshippers". The *Dharmaśastras* and the *Smṛtiśāstras* "did not advocate the cause of any cult in particular". However, many of the *Smārta* Brāhmins, "evolved a kind of worship described as *Pañcāyatana pūjā* in which the principal deities of the five approved Brāhmanical Hindu cults were the objects of veneration. The principal object of worship in it was usually in the form of an aniconic emblem which symbolised all the five cult-deities."[71] It is very difficult to determine the date of the origin of this custom, which probably arose in earlier times. There are still other scholars who think that Vidyāpati was pre-eminently a Śaiva. Nagendra Nath Gupta is one of the exponents of this view.[72] He has drawn our attention to the fact that the songs of Vidyāpati composed

in honour of Hara (Śiva) and Gaurī were very popular in Mithilā. They could be heard in every nook and corner of that region, whereas, songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were scarcely heard there. But, it may be pointed out that the majority of Vidyāpati's songs, collected from Mithilā by Grierson, are associated with Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[73] The home province of Vidyāpati, it is true, claims him as a Śaiva. Moreover, names of his ancestors would indicate that his family was a Śaivaite one.[74] But, it may be pointed out here that Govindadatta, the grand uncle of Vidyāpati, was a Vaiṣṇava. He styled himself *'Harikiṅkara'* in his *Govindamānasollāsa*,[75] Vidyāpati's fame in Bengal rested mainly on his Vaiṣṇava *padāvalī*.

There is a belief, current in Mithilā, that the poet himself worshipped Bāneśvara-Mahādeva, the presiding deity of the village of Bheḍavā. It is also said that the poet dedicated a temple to lord Śiva at Vispī. It is generally believed that a temple of Śiva was erected on the last remains of the poet at Vājitpur.[75a] It is to be remembered in this connection that the poet invoked Śiva in his *Śaivasarvvasvasāra*.[76] Nagendra Nath Gupta has tried to effect the compromise between his own view that Vidyāpati was a Śaiva and that of those who claimed him to be a Vaiṣṇava.[77] He has quoted the passage—*'Bhāla Hara bhāla Hari bhāla tuya kalā'* etc.—for this purpose, and has commented that though the poet was a Śaiva, his Śiva was identical with Viṣṇu. But, it may be just the opposite, i.e., the poet, though a Vaiṣṇava did not forget to eulogize Śiva. He did not notice any difference between the two (*ibid. 'Eka śarira lela dui vāsa/Khana Vaikuṇṭha, khanai Kailāsa//.'*). It is true that the sectarian rancour was never allowed to take a serious turn in Mithilā at that time. Poets and devotees did not see much difference between Śiva and Viṣṇu, the two important gods of the Hindu *trinity* (*ibid, 'O Nārāyaṇa, O Śūlapāni//.'*). It is interesting to note that Vidyāpati had unconsciously referred to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, even when his intention was to sing the glories of Śiva and

Gaurī (cf. *'Kon vana vasathi Maheśa/...Rādhā Kṛṣṇa vanāva//*).

It is argued that the *Vaiṣṇava-bhajanas* are not liked by the common people in Mithilā. They mainly sing songs of Suradāsa and Tulasīdāsa.[78] It is also said that the Maithili Vaiṣṇava poems are very few; and have never been popular beyond the small number of Vaiṣṇava saints. On the contrary, the Śaivaite devotional songs were popular in that land. It has been already remarked that Śrīcaitanya was instrumental in popularising the songs of Vidyāpati. Though, Vidyāpati has been described by Śrīcaitanya as a Vaiṣṇava, some scholars would argue that it did not conclusively prove the poet's Vaiṣṇavite leaning.[79]

A large number of the songs of the best known work (*padāvalī*) of Vidyāpatī end with the names of king Śiva Siṁha and his queen, and few with those of Deva Siṁha and his consort. Occasional verses mention kings Bhogiśvara, Arjuna Siṁha, Amara Siṁha, Rāghava Siṁha and Rudra Siṁha. However, some of these songs, composed in honour of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa but associated with the names of the royal patrons of the poet, prove beyond any doubt that some members of the royal dynasty of Mithilā were supporters of Vaiṣṇavism. This is also a pointer to the fact that not only a large section of the mass, but the royal court also, had some inclinations towards Vaiṣṇavism.[80]

MM. H. P. Sastri thought that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of the medieval period were not divine beings—they were rather imaginary personalities or creations of the poet.[81] In his opinion Vidyāpati composed the Maithili songs simply to please his patrons; whenever he wanted to write in a serious vein, he chose Sanskrit as the medium. He thought that names of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were meaninglessly inserted in these poems. But, it should be pointed out here that these songs would not have found their place in the Vaiṣṇava anthological works—had they not been devotional !.

There is no doubt that Vidyāpati revered Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa,

but it must be admitted that all of his erotic poems do not refer to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends. Erotic poems of Vidyāpati are sometimes secular and sometimes devotional. At least, two poems of Vidyāpati show that his Mādhava was not different from Śiva Siṁha, and that Murāri was Deva Siṁha (*Hāsinīdevī-pati Devasiṁha narapati parasana hothu Murāari*/. etc., *V.N. 79A*). The poet had in his Mādhava—an erotic human being—in most cases his patron; but later, when he became advanced in age, Mādhava was endowed with divine character. Sukumar Sen thinks that the songs of Vidyāpati deal purely with secular love. But, it may be pointed out that as soon as the lover is conceived as the Supreme Being no trace of sensuousness can remain in love-affairs, which is no doubt the key-idea of the later day Vaiṣṇavism.

We do not know much about the Vaiṣṇavas who lived during the time of Vidyāpati in Mithilā. However, we know one Ratnapāṇi, who was the author of the *Kṛṣṇārcana-candrikā*, a younger contemporary of Vidyāpati. The other famous Vaiṣṇava scholar, living in Mithilā in that age, was Viṣṇupurī, the celebrated author of the *Bhaktiratnāvalī*. It is learnt from MS. *No. 312* (Mitra, *Notices*) that Vidyāpati (or the queen herself ?) gave a MS. *Dānavākyāvalī* to Ratnapāṇi in *La. Sam. 371*=1490 A.D. (not 341 as read by some scholars). The latter was devoted to lord Govinda, i.e. Viṣṇu (cf. *Govindārcana-tatpara*). He was the same Ratnapāni, just mentioned. Vidyāpati was a friend of his father.

Kings of Mithilā were devoted to lord Śiva, but king Bhairavasiṁha become a devotee of Viṣṇu. Vācaspati Miśra, a great Maithili author, has styled this king '*Śrī-Vāsudevabhaktaḥ*' in his *Kṛtyamahārṇava*. This king was undoubtedly a Vaiṣṇava, for in the colophon of his authoritative work 'on the process of Viṣṇu-worship', *Viṣṇupūjākalpalatā* (L.S. 371=1466 A.D.), he styles himself as 'one devoted to the feet of lord Hari' (cf. *Haricaraṇaparāyaṇa Śrīmad Bhairavasiṁhadevakṛtau*). Of the court-poets

of king Bhairava Siṁha, the two, viz. Vācaspati and Varddhamāna, were apparently Vaiṣṇava by faith.

It has been shown beforehand that Vidyāpati wrote a large number of poems on the love-sequences of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Vidyāpati has sung the glory of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa through the erotic sentiment. According to Grierson, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are but symbolic personalities.[82] The former symbolises 'the individual soul, *Jīvātmā*, while the latter, *Paramātmā*'. The 'individual soul', is extremely eagar to face the Supreme Being. But, it may be observed here that the love-affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are not idealistic, but real. It is in this way that a Vaiṣṇava looks into these songs.

Vidyāpati has described the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, the eternal pet-child of Nanda of Gokula. We have not one, but a large number of verses, of this poet where Kṛṣṇa is referred to as endowed with certain divine qualities. He is called Mādhava, Hari and Dāmodara etc. Indeed, Mādhava of Vidyāpati is identical with the four-armed deity Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa). Though, many songs of Vidyāpati were included into religious scriptures of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, some scholars would observe that they were not in conformity with the spirit of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism.[83] The niceties of '*gopīprema*' were not understood by Vidyāpati. He did not consider Rādhā as the '*Hlādinī Śakti*' of Kṛṣṇa. MM. H. P. Sastri, for example, has criticised the view of Grierson who thought that these love-lyrics were *Bhajanas*.[84] In the opinion of this scholar, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of the poets of medieval period (including Vidyāpati) were not 'divine beings', but 'imaginary personalities or creations of the poets.' But, scholars like K. N. Mitra and B. B. Majumdar have tried to prove that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa of Vidyāpati were divine beings—they were not 'imaginary personalities,' adopted by the poet for the purpose of composing erotic songs; and thus they were not devoid of any devotional sentiment.[85] Of course, the earlier poems of the poet describe Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in order to work out erotic mysticism.

It is held that the songs of Vidyāpati deal with secular

love.[86] Many songs of Vidyāpati are quite in keeping with the Vaiṣṇava poetics. He was an erudite rhetorician, whose views tallied well with the *Rasaśāstra* of the Vaiṣṇavas. Like a *Caitanyaite* Vaiṣṇava, he has described almost all the stages of the development of love existing between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (cf. *Rūpānurāga, Kalahāntaritā, Rāsakrīḍā, Viraha* etc.). Vidyāpati was adept in describing the mental condition known as '*viraha.*' It was he who first successfully represented Kṛṣṇa as the husband of many damsels.

From what has been said above, it is clear that Kṛṣṇa of Vidyāpati is the same person as the 8th incarnation of Viṣṇu, having the same name. Had he not been so, he would not have been designated with appellations like Dāmodara, Vanamālī etc. In his *Kīrttipatākā*, the poet took Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, as living a life of earthly enjoyment (primarily).[87] Vidyāpati has received high praises from the Maithili people as a devout Vaiṣṇava poet for his description of Kṛṣṇa, the divine hero. He has described the *aiśvarya* aspect of Kṛṣṇa. Association of Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa, the Lord, had long been incorporated into the Hindu texts. It is as old as the days of Jayadeva, or still much earlier. According to Vidyāpati, Kṛṣṇa is Lord Himself, His beloved is Rādhā, and both of them reside in Vṛndāvana. But, it may be pointed out here that Kṛṣṇa resides in Vṛndāvana in his *nityalīlā*, though in his *prakaṭalīlā* he may go either to Mathurā or to Dvārakā. He realised it at the fag-end of his life. The divine love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa serves as the highest ideal of life for a devotee. It leads one to attain eternal bliss which is the highest objective of life.

The Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal would see in almost all poems of Vidyāpati references to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, because out of 790 genuine songs of Vidyāpati only 384 do not contain any such reference. The poet has used the fallowing synonyms of Kṛṣṇa :—(a) Mādhava—175 times, (b) Kānha—107 times, (c) Hari—106 times, (d) Murāri—45 times, (e) Madhusūdana or Madhuripu—5 times, (f) Dāmodara-Vanamālī—5 times,

(g) Govinda—3 times and (h) Nandanandana—only one time. But the name of Mādhava did not always refer to lord Kṛṣṇa or Murāri. We find at least two songs where Mādhava is not different from king Śiva Siṁha, and that Murāri is king Deva Siṁha himself (cf. *Bhanai Vidyāpati je jana nāgara tāpara ratali nāri | Hāsinīdevī-pati Deva Siṁha narapati parasana hothu Murāri ||*—V.N. 79A). The *Kīrttipatākā* of Vidyāpati is devoted to the patron, king Śiva Siṁha and his amours. In the benedictory verses of the present work the poet makes an important statement, which reveals his attitude towards the amours of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* etc. and amounts to saying that Rāma took a 'second birth' as Kṛṣṇa only to enjoy the conjugal love of which he was deprived during his previous birth.

The flute of Kṛṣṇa occupies an important place in the development of love-amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, for it exercised a great influence on the mind of Rādhā. But, Vidyāpati in his early days could not conceive the avidity of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa—he realised it only at the closing years of his life. It may be that the poet composed in his early days some erotic poems unconnected with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends ; but there are evidences in hand to show that Vidyāpati in his ripe old age became immersed into Vaiṣṇavite ideas, and composed songs in honour of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[88] But, this simple thing has not been understood by scholars like Dr. Umesh Misra.[89] Poems of Vidyāpati, composed at the royal court, lack in devotional attitude, for Rādhā in them does not know that she will have to respond to the call of Kṛṣṇa—permeated into air through the sweet sound of flute. Vidyāpati has in his credit five excellent songs—the subject of which is the love of Rādhā.[90] Behind this deep yearning of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa, one can notice the keen desire of the poet to have communion with the Lord Himself. The above songs record Vidyāpati's deep devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa. He completely surrenders himself to the Lord and seeks refuge in His lotus-feet.

There exists in the *Dārbhāṅgā Rāj Library*, a manuscript of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, which bears the inscription '*Vidyāpaterlipiriyaṁ*'.[91] This very fact has led Khagendra Nath Mitra and B. B. Majumdar to prove that Vidyāpati was a Vaiṣṇava.[92] But, the Maithili scholars think that mere copying of the *Bhāgavata*, made by Vidyāpati, is no proof of his Vaiṣṇavite leaning.[93] They argue that the poet was in a sorrowful mood, because his friend and patron, king Śiva Siṁha had disappeared for an indefinite period ; and he probably copied it to atone for having amorously written of lord Kṛṣṇa. There is nothing wrong in Vidyāpati having been copying in a devout manner the *Bhāgavata*, while he might have at the same time been composing love-songs in the manner of Jayadeva's handling of Kṛṣṇa's love-story. But, Vidyāpati, a true Vaiṣṇava, had a deep regard for the *Bhāgavata* ; and as a token of this, he himself copied it. His mind was immersed into the *Bhāgavata* ideals. The 'tutelary deity' of the poet was no doubt Śiva, but he himself worshipped Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The Maithili Brāhmaṇas took a strong exception to the poet's copying the *Bhāgavata*—his 'tutelary deity' being Śiva. Keśava Miśra, the foremost among these Maithili Brāhmaṇas, openly addressed him (rather ridiculously) as a 'greedy priest of the town' (*atilubdha-nagarayājaka*). It most probably points to his acceptance of the gift of the village of Vispi by his patron, king Śiva Siṁha.

According to Locana, the celebrated author of the *Rāgataraṅginī*, Kaviśekhara was in charge of tuning the songs of Vidyāpati.[94] Or, it may be that he was requested to write the musical scores of the songs, composed by Vidyāpati.

Vidyāpati has been taken by different scholars as associated with different cults, an ecclectic *Pañcopāsaka*, a monotheist, a *Sahajiyā*, etc. But on the basis of the data, which have been collected in the previous pages, it may be said that he was an 'ecclectic' Vaiṣṇava. In Bengal, Orissa and Assam he was known as a great Vaiṣṇava ; and he with Jayadeva and others were greatly responsible for popularising the cult

of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Two eminent non-Bengali scholars of modern times, Śyāmsundar Dās and Vrajanandan Sahāi describe him as a Vaiṣṇava poet.[95] While the latter has tried to designate the poet, as 'Vaiṣṇava-cūḍāmaṇi', the former has noticed some influences of Mādhava, Viṣṇusvāmī and Nimbārka in his works.

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CHAPTER VI

CAITANYADEVA AND GAUḌĪYA VAIṢṆAVISM

It is generally believed that Śrīcaitanya founded the Bengal (*Gauḍīya*) Vaiṣṇavism. But in the opinion of Mr. Kennedy 'it is a mistake to think of Caitanya as in any sense the originator of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal'.[1] Doctors S. K. De[2] and J. N. Sarkar[3] have also tried to show that Caitanya can hardly be called as the 'founder of a sect or a church' (in Bengal).

It is a known fact that Vaiṣṇavism had its adherents for many centuries. Indeed, this particular religious system was not new in Bengal, for it had been current here long before the advenf of Śrīcaitanya ; and this has been described in previous chapters. However, it will suffice to say here that some of the celebrated poets of ancient Bengal and its neighbourhood, like Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdāsa, Vidyāpati and Mālādhara Vasu, owed much to Vaiṣṇavism and were profited by the reading of Vaiṣṇava scriptures like *Śrīmad-bhāgavata* etc. Their works are Vaiṣṇavite in nature. So, there cannot be any doubt about the existence of Vaiṣṇavite works in Bengal long before the days of Caitanya.[4] But it must be said to the credit of Śrīcaitanya that 'the impetus he gave to it (Vaiṣṇavism) made it the main channel through which the national genius expressed itself for three centuries after him.' He revitalised this faith, which was in a wretched and degenerated condition due to the foreign dominance, social tyranny and coarsening features of decadent *Tāntri-cism*. The weak and emasculated people of Bengal could not even think of creative joy 'they were thirsting for diversion from action to emotion.' So, a large and literate section of them had recourse to *Tāntric* ritualism in all its orgiastic excess. At this time Caitanyadeva appeared as a *Messiah*. People of Bengal of that time longed for a religion, that would

have emotional appeal to their religious instinct, and would act as a sort of ecstatic balm to their hearts. This was supplied by Caitanya and for that he was hailed as a 'Prophet'. Like every enthusiast Caitanya inflamed everything, but discovered practically nothing. Among the notable achievements of this religious leader, mention may be made of the initiation of Rūpa and Sanātana to the 'religion of love.' To score a win over these two astute theologians, who were nurtured in the scholastic field of traditional philosophy, was no mean an achievement.

As regards the socio-religious conditions of the Bengalee society of the 15th century, i.e., the time when Caitanya appeared the authentic sources of our information are different biographies of this 'Prophet.' If we are to put any reliance upon the biographers of Śrīcaitanya, who lived not far from the time of the latter, there cannot be any doubt that there was a lamentable decadence of religious life and ideals in Bengal. Multifarious were the factors which led to the creation of such a state of affairs, the chief of them being foreign dominance. The country was under the occupation of the Muhammedan rulers, who were alien both in race and religion. The obvious result of this was the religious persecution and inhuman repression of the Hindus by the rulers. As the rulers were 'iconoclast' Muslims, they despised the Hindus, the idol-worshippers. The religious ceremonies and festivals as well as the image-worship of the Hindus were tolerated by them with a certain amount of difficulty. Thus, it can be easily surmised that the politico-religious life of the Hindus was not at all safe and secure during the Muslim rule in Bengal in the medieval times.[5] But this was not all. The tyranny of the foreign ruler was also accompanied by the greater oppression of dominant Brāhmanism with its conservative outlook and despoptic spirit. The foreign domination and the resultant fear for contamination of the people by their indulging in the *mlecchācārās* compelled the *Smārta* law-givers of the Hindu society to lay strict and hidebound rules of

conduct to be followed by the general people as a safeguard against the likely aberrations. For the aforesaid reasons, the *Brāhman* law-givers, the *Smārtas*, had no other alternative but to ensure the stability of the Hindu society by tightening the age-old caste-system with rigid and water-tight religious taboos or injunctions. This was best exemplified by the great yet conservative 'religious codes' or compendia prepared by Raghunandana, the greatest *Smārta paṇḍit* that Bengal has ever produced. Irrespective of these factors, the religious life of Bengal was at the lowest ebb, both spiritually and morally, when Caitanya appeared in the scene. Some minor *laukika* cults, such as those of Manasā, Dakṣiṇa Rāya, Dharma Ṭhākura and others were prevalent at that time. Later on, they were accommodated in the Brāhmanical fold. Tenets and practices, left behind by the degraded *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣunīs* of the *Vajrayāna* and *Sahajayāna* orders of Buddhism, were also absorbed into current Hinduism. They had a degenerating effect on the socio-religious conditions of late medieval Bengal. The poison of the *Tāntric* orgy, as revealed in the teachings of the *Vāmācārī* school, and the mystic and semi-mystic cults, like the *Sahajayāna* and *Nāthapantha* exercised a debasing influence on religious thoughts of this period. In a word, the condition of religious life in Bengal was in the dire need of reformation. Caitanya, who was prone to set the house in order by enacting the role of a reformer, was born amidst such chaotic conditions.[6]

In the *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, the biography on Caitanya by Vṛndāvana Dāsa (*Ādi Parva*, Chapter I), it is said that the *Vaiṣṇava kīrttana* and emotionalism were looked down upon as weak and vulgar by the *Vedāntists*, whose topic of conversation was the *Vedānta*. The latter was characterised by Karṇapūra as pantheists, who believed in no other gods save their own selves. Śrīvāsa was turned out of Dayānanda's house, because he sobbed and showed signs of emotion when the *Bhāgavata* was recited (*ibid*, Chap. IX). In the latter half of the 15th century A.D. the Vaiṣṇava community does

not seem to have been ascendant in or around Navadvīpa. However, being unsatisfied with the materialistic worship and the unspiritual surroundings, this Vaiṣṇava community found an outlet for their spiritual longings for the *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, which included amongst others the meetings for religious discussions, where the readings and comments on the *Bhāgavata* and 'singing of the names', exploits and dalliances of Kṛṣṇa were made. This group was probably influenced by the Vaiṣṇava tendencies of Mādhavendra Purī and his disciples, for Advaitācārya alias Kamalākṣa Bhaṭṭācārya, the leading figure of the group, was a disciple of the former.[7] Afterwards, Advaita became one of the two leaders who associated themselves with Caitanya in the propagation of this new movement. Not only this, there are other proofs to show that Caitanya was born and brought up in a Vaiṣṇavite atmosphere. Śrīcaitanya (his earlier name was Viśvambhara and the present name was not given to him until he became a *Sannyāsī*), the tenth child of Jagannātha Miśra and Śacīdevī, was born in the year 1486 A.D. at Navadvīpa. The grandfather of Caitanya was Paṇḍit Upendra Miśra of Sylhet. He was a learned Vaiṣṇava, rich and possessed of all good virtues. He was the father of seven saintly sons, one of whom was Jagannātha, the father of Viśvambhara. Afterwards, Jagannātha left Sylhet for Nadiya in order to live on the Ganges-side (*Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Ādi. p., XIII*. p. 60). Jagannātha and his father were Vaiṣṇavas. From a study of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, it is clear that Caitanyadeva (Viśvambhara) was born in an orthodox Vaiṣṇava Brāhmin family. Caitanya's father, Jagannātha led a pious life. Being a devout Vaiṣṇava, saturated with the teachings of *ahiṁsā*, it was natural that no 'meat' could enter the house of Jagannātha. As a matter of religion not a 'single particle of food' was taken by any member of a family without being first offered to Kṛṣṇa, the tutelary deity. Then the offered food was taken by the family as *prasāda*. The hospitable nature of this Vaiṣṇava family attracted many wandering

fellow-travellers, who would frequent their house so much that it must have created some sub-conscious impression on Viśvambhara's mind. The personal charm and the distinction of the promising young scholar of Navadvīpa, the 'Vārānasī' of Bengal, made him a marked figure. There is no wonder that the Vaiṣṇava leaders would be aggrieved to see that so promising a son of Vaiṣṇava household should show so little interest in his father's faith. But, it was not due to any lack of religious influence. Direct efforts to influence him were met in a half-jesting and half-sceptical spirit, and he showed little vital interest. It is said that when the saintly Vaiṣṇava ascetic Īśvara Purī tried to win him to a devout life, the only response that Caitanya gave, was to pick flaws in the grammar of Sanskrit texts, quoted by the former. But this attitude was more or less like a mask to hide an undercurrent of feelings. Advaita was a great friend of the Miśra family, and he was mainly instrumental in bringing Caitanya to the Vaiṣṇava fold.

Caitanya was a disciple of Īśvara Purī, but their first meeting was not a very happy one, for the former ridiculed the latter for his lack of knowledge in grammar. For this indifferent and scoffing attitude we should not misjudge Caitanya, because he had certainly stored up latent feelings and aspirations for the 'religion of love' in his mind. They made a natural outburst in the right moment, which appeared soon when he visited the Viṣṇupāda temple at Gayā in connection with the *śrāddha* ceremony of his father in 1508 A.D. The sacred surroundings of the temple moved Caitanya very deeply, and his religious outlook was completely changed as a result. Being desirous of leading a religious life, he took Īśvara Purī as his preceptor, and returned from Gayā as a disciple.

After this memorable incident Śrīcaitanya returned to Navadvīpa as a completely changed man. The mystic trances, a striking feature of the emotional experiences of Caitanya, had their beginnings at this time. From this time onward,

lord Kṛṣṇa became the centre of his thoughts, for he abandoned all interests in scholastic and other worldly affairs. His attainments and position in Navadvīpa made him a very desirable accession to 'the Kṛṣṇa faith', and these together with the character of his *Bhakti* made him the natural leader of the Vaiṣṇava community. The reading of the Vaiṣṇava scriptures and 'singing of the name of Kṛṣṇa' (i.e., *saṅkīrttana*) in the evening were the redeeming features of the daily programme of the Vaiṣṇavite believers of that time.

Like all great religious leaders, Caitanya had to take recourse to spreading the contagion of *Bhakti* through the effective medium of 'community songs' or *kīrttana.* The *kīrttana* became in his hands something more than the fervent worship of a few devotees, for it soon developed into the 'processional' *kīrttana* of hundreds of people. From being a few devout men worshipping in their own premises, Vaiṣṇavism became a popular mass movement. The fervour and resounding appeal of the *kīrttana* was carried to the very doorway of every home.[14] As a result of it, the rapid multiplication of converts into neo-Vaiṣṇavism took place, the waves of enthusiastic *Bhakti* rose higher and higher in the community. In spite of the popular support to the neo-Vaiṣṇava movement, a large and influential section of the public, comprising of orthodox Brāhmaṇa scholars and elite of the society, was opposed to it. The *saṅkīrttana* in particular was the object of their wrath. The Muslim ruler of Nadīyā also tried to suppress the movement. But, he was won over. Though, the movement gained momentum day by day, Caitanya was constrained to witness the stubborn opposition offered by the Brāhmaṇas. Being disgusted with their attitude or being unable to win them to his side, Śrīcaitanya planned to sever all local ties, and embraced the universally honoured life of a *sannyāsī.* The motive behind the plan is obscure. There must have been some spiritual yearnings or inner compulsions, which led him to abandon everything for the servitude to Kṛṣṇa. This passionate devotion led him to

approach Keśava Bhāratī, a Śaṅkarite-*sannyāsī*, for being initiated into the order of the Sannyasīs. As an ascetic of the 'Bhāratī' order, he became known as 'Kṛṣṇa Caitanya'. This happened at Katwa in 1510 A.D. Shortly after this, he started for Benares, but was actually brought to Śāntipur by his disciples. Afterwards, he started for Purī and then went on a tour of Southern and Western India. He visited many temples in those regions. His pilgrimage covered a period of twenty months. One or two interesting items of his pilgrimage may be noted here. His meeting with Rāi Rāmānanda, the Governor of Rajahmundry under Pratāparudra the king of Orissa and the author of *Jagannāthaballabha-nāṭaka*, near Rajahmundry on the river Godāvarī is a memorable one, and has been described in great details by the author of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*. Rāmānanda was a *praśiṣya* of Mādhavendra Purī. The long and scholastic discourses between the two, regarding the peculiar theme of *Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*, and the types, stages, qualities and passions of love for the God, embodying the peculiar tenets of 'Bengal Vaiṣṇavism' *par excellence*, have been set forth here for the first time with a theological relish and precision. In other Caitanyaite biographies this meeting has not been so vividly described, for Caitanya was shown therein as disinterested in those talks. So, it is very difficult to say whether this meeting exerted any influence upon the religious outlook of Caitanya so far as the *sakhībhāva* and *parakīyāvāda* are concerned. But, this much is certain that Caitanya loved to read the drama, written by Rāmānanda.

Among the places and temples visited by Caitanya during his pilgrimage to the South, mention may be made of Śrīraṅgam, where he spent some months with the *Śrī Vaiṣṇava* devotees. The Śṛṅgerī Maṭh of the great Monist Śaṅkarācārya was also visited by him. He visited Udīpi in South Kannaṛa, where Madhvācārya worshipped the image of Kṛṣṇa installed by himself, and had discussions on Vaiṣṇavism with

the followers of Madhva. Whether these discussions turned Caitanya into a '*Mādhva*' ascetic is questionable.

During his tour of South India, Caitanya discovered two important Vaiṣṇava works, viz. *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and *Brahma Saṁhitā*, which were henceforward deeply read and interpreted by him.[8] He had copies made of each of these texts and brought them back with utmost care. These two works, which are said to have moulded the theology of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, have come from the pen of the Keralite *paṇḍits*. The works were discovered from Pāṇḍhārpur (in Mahārāṣṭra) and Travancore respectively (the first one is by a member of the Nimbārka *Sampradāya*. It will be, however, a mistake to think that Caitanya's religious ideas are entirely based upon these two works, for he never dreamt of or heard of them before he became a *sannyāsī*. His religious experiences are based upon the works of Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdāsa. The passionate theme of the 'religion of love', treated in the *Brahma Saṁhitā* and *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* & deepened and clarified by the vivid experiences of Śrīcaitanya, marked the beginning of a definite theological development.

Due to the contagious effect of the fervent devotion of Caitanya, people were easily won and initiated to '*Kṛṣṇa-bhakti*'. It must be said to the credit of this Prophet that he was not only able to win the heart of the people of South India, but also won many of them to his personal faith. Throughout his tour he encountered intriguers like the Buddhists and the followers of other religious creeds. In the religious encounters with the *Mīmāṁsakas*, the *Vedāntists* and followers of *Sāṁkhya* system, *Smṛtis*, *Purāṇas* and the *Vedas*, he refuted their views, established Vaiṣṇava doctrine and won them to his way of thinking (*Cait. Car.*, II. 9, p. 225). He was also able to win over a Buddhist teacher and his disciples. He was, however, unable to change the various sectarian beliefs and practices of the people in favour of his new faith. The Vaiṣṇavas of South India of that age included the sister sects like the *Śrī Vaiṣṇava* and *Mādhva*. But

their devotional beliefs were not such as to excel his sympathy with the *Śrī Vaiṣṇavas* more than with the *Mādhvas*, the branch to which he belonged according to some scholars. By the force of his devotion to Kṛṣṇa he succeeded in converting many worshippers of Rāma-Sītā, or Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, or simply Kṛṣṇa into his new faith, which consisted of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā only. After his South India tour Caitanya did not return to Navadvīpa, but made Purī his new home. Here, begun the first of a series of 20 annual pilgrimages by his Bengal disciples. In 1513 A.D., Caitanya started for Vṛndāvana, which was romantically associated with the Kṛṣṇa legend. The recovery of the sacred sites of Vṛndāvana by the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas is one of the most interesting events in the history of '*Gauḍīya*' Vaiṣṇavism. He entrusted the work of reclamation of these lost sites to Lokanātha Ācārya, and directed Sanātana and Rūpa, his two new disciples living at Rāmakeli, to make Vṛndāvana an academic as well as religious centre of the new faith and produce literature for the sect. In or about 1514 A.D., Caitanya started for Vārānasī. His Vārānasī visit is noted for devotional ecstasy and conversion of Prakāśānanda, a *Vedāntist*, to '*Kṛṣṇa Bhakti*'. But he made little impression on the *Advaitist* and *Śaivite* saints of the great city. It is said that the Śaṅkarite *sannyāsīs* of this place slighted Caitanya for the outward show of devotion, manifested in song and dance. Being *Vedāntists*, they indulged in deep meditation, and thus there was no place for 'demonstrative devotion' in their faith. The dogmas and doctrines of the new faith of Caitanya, ably expounded by Rūpa and Sanātana, were formulated in this place.

Thus, touring South, West and North India extensively for several years, till about 1515 A.D., Caitanya settled permanently at Purī at the age of 30. His sojourn at Purī was marked with small incidents and religious ecstasies. His Bengal disciples used to meet him there annually. However, due to the prolonged strain of mysterious emotionalism his health failed, and he passed away in the month of July in 1533 A.D.[9]

There were as many as 'five sects' of the Vaiṣṇavas in the medieval times, viz. the *Mādhva*, the *Śrī Vaiṣṇava*, the *Viṣṇu-svāmī*, the *Nimbārkite* and the *Vallabhācārī*.[10] Of these the *Mādhva* sect, founded by Madhvācārya early in the 13th century A.D., was probably the first sect based on the *Vṛndāvana līlā*. As the works of this sect were based on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, Rādhā had no place in their sectarian devotions. Madhva or Ānandatīrtha was 'dualistic' in his philosophy. Although, he exalted *bhakti* to Kṛṣṇa, he did not make him an object of exclusive worship. This sect was particularly strong in the South. In the opinion of several scholars, the sect founded by Caitanya was more or less a branch of the *Mādhva Sampradāya*, which was said to have been the most influential in Bengal before the advent of Caitanyadeva.[11] Madhvācārya (also known as Ānandatīrtha & Pūrṇa-prajña) himself was said to have been one of the *Ādigurus* of the Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavas. He was a strong critic of the *Advaitavāda* of Śaṅkara. The *Dvaitavāda*, of which he was the originator, vouchsafed the existence of the individual soul and material world along with that of the Supreme Soul. It has been argued by scholars like Dr. D. C. Sen and Kennedy[12] that Caitanya himself was brought up in *Mādhva* tradition, that his older contemporary Advaitā-cārya as well as many of his influential relatives and associates had close connection with *Mādhvaism*, that Mādhavendra Purī was a *Mādhva* ascetic, and that Īśvara Purī and Keśava Bhāratī, the *dīkṣā*—and *sannyāsa*-gurus respectively of Viśvambhara-Caitanya, were initiated into *Mādhvaism*. Professor P. Mukherji[13] of Orissa has also made efforts to show that Caitanya had inclination to *Mādhvaism*. He has mainly based his arguments on *Brahmavidyāprakāśa* of Acyutānanda, *Govinda-bhāṣya* and *Prameya-ratnāvalī* of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. In the 'Guruparamparā' lists contained in these works, Śrīcaitanya has been shown as the spiritual descendant of both Madhvācārya and Mādhavendra Purī. He (Prof. Mukherji) has also shown that

the 'Gauḍīya list' was also in conformity with that one kept at 'Uttarāḍhī Maṭha' in Udīpi, so far as the names of the first five preceptors upto Jayatīrtha were concerned. But, Dr. S. K. De[14] has rightly remarked that while, no reference has been made to Madhvācārya or *Mādhvaism* in the early records of the 'Gauḍīya' Vaiṣṇavas, viz. *Caitanya Candrodaya* (*Nāṭaka*) and *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, some such references have been made to Mādhavendra Purī. He has shown that prior to the composition of the *Bhakti-ratnākara* (*circā* 18th century), Madhva or *Mādhvaism* has been very seldom cited. On the authority of Act VI of the *Caitanya Candrodaya*, it may be said that Caitanya was an *Advaitist*. The *Gauragaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* list of preceptors, showing Madhvācārya as one of the *gurus* of Caitanyadeva (mentioned along with Mādhavendra Purī and Īśvara Purī), is however, a late work. Scholars like Kennedy[15] have tried to show that Caitanya began his life as a *Mādhva*. But, Caitanya soon showed his inclination to *Vedāntic Monism* or *Advaita-vāda* of Śaṅkarācārya, and lastly to *Acintya-bhedābhedavāda* (of which he was the originator).

So far as doctrinal aspects are concerned, *Caitanyaism* embodies in it the religious experiences of Śaṅkara, Madhvācārya, Mādhavendra Purī, Nimbārka and Viṣṇu-svāmī. Īśvara Purī, and Keśava Bhāratī (*gurus* of Caitanya) were Śaṅkarite *sannyāsīs*. Like the *Mādhvas*, the Caitanyaites also, based their religious beliefs on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*; but unlike the former the latter exalted Rādhā to high position and laid stress upon the *Rāsapañcādhyāya* section of the *Bhāgavata* (which was denounced by the *Madhvas*). It is said that Mādhavendra Purī, who exerted some influence on the religious belief of Śrīcaitanya, was a *Mādhva* ascetic. But, it must be pointed out that unlike Madhvācārya, Mādhavendra Purī and his disciple Caitanyadeva gave up their *śikhā* and *sūtra*.[16]

It has been alleged by some that Śrīcaitanya was a Śaṅkarite *sannyāsī*.[17] But, it may seem paradoxical that

Caitanya, who began his life as a Śaṅkarite ascetic, should himself turn out to be a devout Vaiṣṇava, to whom only divine love was considered as a means to the spiritual salvation of human beings. Though formerly a *Vedāntist*, Caitanya showed his inclination towards Vaiṣṇavism, comprising of religious attitude, called *bhakti*, to the Highest God, Kṛṣṇa. This was largely due to the influences of Keśava Bhāratī. Caitanya tried to make a compromise between the '*Vedāntic*' *Monism* and *Devotional Dualism*,[18] and laid the foundations of the system, known as *Acintya-bhedābhedavāda* or *Acintya-dvaitādvaitavāda*. Traces of this type of popular synthesis can be found in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, also. Two of the most illustrious predecessors of Śrīcaitanya, viz. Śrīdharasvāmin (*circa* 14th century) and Mādhavendra Purī (*circa* 15th century), made attempts for the synthesization of the same.[19] Though a *sannyāsī* of the 'Pūrī' order, Mādhavendra often fainted in ecstasy at the very sight of the 'dark cloud in the sky', as it reminded him of the 'dark blue colour of Kṛṣṇa'.[20] Like Keśava Bhāratī, he also believed in the supremacy of 'Bhakti' over 'Jñāna'. It will be, thus, clear that Caitanya was not the only religious leader to lay stress on the sincere and passionate love for God as the only way to salvation, other saints of the medieval times also worked on the same line. Like the followers of Nimbārka and Viṣṇusvāmī, Caitanya and his adherents were saturated with the *Rādhā-vāda* and laid emphasis on the *Rāsapañcādhyāya* section of the *Bhāgavata*.[21]

The *Bhakti* movement, started in Bengal by Mādhavendra Purī, was carried forward and definitely shaped by Śrīcaitanya.

Caitanya's Contribution to the Sect:

It has been elsewhere shown that Caitanya was not the originator of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal.[22] The sweet songs of Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were popularized in Bengal long before the advent of Cai-

tanya. Though, Caitanya started a neo-Vaiṣṇava movement by giving a new interpretation to the old faith, the influence of the Vaiṣṇava tradition of the country on him was immense and varied. The Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, as reconstituted by Śrīcaitanya, was both homogenous and complex; and, while it may be related to the history of the growth and development of Vaiṣṇavism in general, the dogmas and spiritual practices of *Caitanyaism* are no less component parts of the same.

The doctrine of *Bhakti* and adoration to Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā are woven round the texture of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. The word *Bhakti* has a special bearing upon (Bengal) Vaiṣṇavism, though the idea of *Bhakti* is as old as the days of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Mahābhārata*. The elements forming Bengal Vaiṣṇavism had existed for generations in Bengal in the person of her Vaiṣṇava adherents. The credit of Śrīcaitanya, however, lies in fusing these elements into devotional fervour for Kṛṣṇa, which culminated into neo-Vaiṣṇavism full of vigour and energy. The followers of Caitanya gave it a form—perpetual and strong. But, none has succeeded in effecting the stamp of personality, so firmly put upon it by Śrīcaitanya.

Caitanya's life became 'the norm', by which the songs about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were interpreted. To the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal, Kṛṣṇa's life was something like a drama of the eternal longing of the human soul for the infinite. So, it was quite natural that the life of the Master was used to illustrate and interpret the literature of the movement.[23]

Chaitanya as a Social Reformer:

It is a mistake to call Caitanya a social reformer, though the life and teaching of the great saint had manifold social effects.[24] It seems perfectly clear, however, that Caitanya was not concerned with the reforms of the Hindu society—his sole interest being religion. His religious experiences, however, came into conflict with the Hindu social system. His so-called social reforms were only bye-products of *Bhakti*, the chief characteristics of which was 'catholicity' and equality

in the eye of God. His breadth of view was more or less opposed to orthodox Hinduism, for he proclaimed that all men could find a place in common religious worship and be counted as equal in the attitude of devotion. This was startling and revolutionary. Many sayings, attributed to Caitanya (though we cannot vouchsafe for their authenticity), seem to transcend the caste-system altogether. Caitanya went far beyond the customs and conventions of his time in the direction of a brotherhood emanating from *Bhakti*. He accepted converts from the Islam freely, and one of his beloved disciples was such a person, Haridāsa by name. He repeatedly said that *Bhakti* was accessible even to the lowest classes of Hindu society. He had the courage to preach a message of religious freedom, which made a place for all in the cult of 'loving devotion'. Naturally, this made a tremendous appeal to the hearts of the common people. The most striking feature of this neo-Vaiṣṇavism was the simplification of religion. The only requisite was 'the chanting of the sacred name'. In it, the humblest, the most ignorant and the poorest of all, could join. It was an emancipation of common men from ecclesiastical tyranny.[25] 'Temple worship,' no doubt, occupied a prominent place in the practice of Caitanya and his followers. But, the heart of this movement was *saṅkīrttana*. It goes to the credit of Śrīcaitanya that in the midst of 'a sacrifice-ridden and *caste-mad* society,' he inaugurated 'a popular religious movement which for a time freed the commonalty of men from the ancient thraldom of the law book and the priest, and led them into a common fellowship of devotion.'[26] As to the widespread popularity of *Caitanyaism* in and outside Bengal, we may at the first instance refer to the extremely sincere personality of Śrīcaitanya. He would teach the truth by practising the same. Whether conceived theologically as the unification of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in one body, or commonly as an *Avatāra*, the belief in the godhead of Śrīcaitanya became widespread, particularly in Bengal and Orissa.[27]

Caitanya was a great task-master. He enjoined a strict adherence to discipline. The new mode of his endeavour was 'singing the name of lord in congregation.' Caitanya inspired the devotees, like Sanātana, Rūpa, Raghunātha and a host of others, in order to work out a philosophy with the doctrines he had preached. On the other hand, the task of popularizing *nāma-saṅkīrttana* was entrusted to his householder-followers like Nityānanda, Advaita and Śrīvāsa.

In the medieval times (*c.* 11th-16th cent. A.D.) Bengal was marked by a cross-current of pronounced heterodoxy—a spirit of strong protest against the rigid caste-system and a scathing criticism against the dry logical controversies. Not only that, but the elaborate paraphernalia of religious practices and ceremonies also, were strongly condemned.[28]

Salient Features of Caitanyaism:

The principal features of *Caitanyaism* are[29]: Devotionalism in the life of a *sannyāsī* and the charm and beauty of the self-love of the god, who himself accepted a human form through infinite compassion for human beings in order to bestow on them something which was denied to them up-till that time. Emphasis was given upon the divine abode of Kṛṣṇa (*Goloka*) and the divine sports of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is said that the lord in his eternal *līlā* created a second to him, i.e. Rādhā. According to the belief of the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, significance of 'divine love' was a sealed mystery to men up-till the lord incarnated himself in Śrīcaitanya in whom the self-created dual nature of lord as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā became unified. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were incarnated in the person of Caitanya, while the other *gopīs* became incarnate as his followers.

From the theological point of view, *Caitanyaism* lays emphasis on the truth of the *līlā*—the divine sports of Kṛṣṇa with the cowherds and cowherdesses of Vṛndāvana in general and with his eternal consort Rādhā in particular.[30] The importance of the all-attractive *līlā* was established by the pre-Caitanya poets like Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdāsa.

These poets might not have been devotees of an orthodox Vaiṣṇava type, but they were undoubtedly poets of eminence and fountain-heads of divine inspirations. Caitanya made full and fervent use of this artistic and divinely inspired heritage.

Highest emphasis is laid by the *Caitanyaites* on 'the calling out the name in procession.' Another striking feature of *Caitanyaism* is the preference for the 'joint worship' of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to the 'single devotion' to Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya gave an exalted position to Rādhā. It is clear that by accepting the *cult of Rādhā*, Caitanyadeva put the sect, named after him, into a difficult and embarrassing position. Later on, 'Vaishṇavas accepted without demur the superiority of the *parakīyā-vāda* over *svakīyā-vāda*, but the other doctrinaires evidently wanted to effect a compromise between the dogma of their master with the standards of decent society and tradition. As Caitanya never gave a clear exposition of his creed, he never felt the necessity of explaining such inconsistencies. But, his immediate followers accepted the new goddess under protest and attempted to prove that the relation between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was regular. The Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs knew it very well that Indian poetics did not approve of the unification of the two persons in one, for such a union was not only unlawful and impious but it obstructed the principal sentiment of *rasa* also.'[31]

According to Caitanya 'love' is the fascination that attracts all men. The Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal have struck a new note in their theology. This is first expounded in the works of Rūpa and Sanātana, but the standard vernacular authority for it is the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta.*

The *japa*, or 'the recitation of god's name', is enjoined as the first thing to be done as a step towards spiritual advancement. Merely repeating the name of the lord was considered to be sufficient for attaining the goal. Caitanya must have read religious texts like the *Bhāgavata*, the *Brahma Saṁhitā*, the *Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛta* ; lyrics like the *Gītagovinda* ; the *padas*

of Vidyāpati and Caṇḍīdāsa ; and 'religious operas' like the *Jagannāthavallabha-nāṭaka* of Rāi Rāmānanda.

Caitanyaism believes in 'three stages, or gradations of one and indivisible reality, which are designated respectively as the *Brahman*, *Paramātman* and the *Bhagavat*. The Bengal school identifies the *Bhagavat* with Kṛṣṇa, who is depicted in the *Bhāgavata*, and presents him as its Highest Personal God. It maintains that Kṛṣṇa is not an incarnation of the Divine Being, partial or complete, but the *Bhagavat* Himself in his perfect form, i.e., as *Paramātman* (cf. *Kṛṣṇastu Bhagavān svayam*).[32]

The mundane existence of lord Kṛṣṇa is regarded as entirely motiveless, and represented as an expression of his infinite attribute of bliss (i.e., *līlā* or sport for the purpose of making his devotees enjoy the sweetness of this bliss). This being the central purport of the *Bhāgavata*, the *purāṇas* or texts which speak of their own deities as the Highest Being are rejected as *Tāmasika*, and, therefore, inferior in authority to the greatest *Sāttvika purāṇa*, the *Bhāgavata*.

Worship of deities, other than *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa is forbidden. But, deities like Śiva, Viṣṇu or Brahmā can be worshipped, for they are themselves *Bhaktas* or partial aspects of the lord. It is said that these deities are but *guṇāvatāras* of lord Kṛṣṇa.[33]

Vaiṣṇava Bhakti, i.e., 'Prīti', brings in one context many nuances of the emotional worship of Kṛṣṇa which was made current by *Caitanyaism*. Though, the *Bhāgavata* is an important document of this sect, it is the literary activity of the medieval Bengal which produced in Sanskrit as well as in Bengali a remarkable literature peculiar to itself.

The fundamental theory of *Bhakti* as a *rasa* and its essential emotionalism were laboriously expounded in the *Bhaktirasāmṛta-sindhu* and the *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* of Rūpa Gosvāmī. Something may be said of *Akaitava Bhakti* or 'devotional feeling' (so peculiar to Bengal Vaiṣṇavas) which may be of two kinds, viz. *Vaidhī* and *Rāgānugā*.[34] According

to the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal, a true devotee (*parikara*) of lord Kṛṣṇa is one who gives *Rāgānugā Bhakti* to him. It has enlivened the mass of Sanskrit and Bengali lyrics with the poetic possibilities of its mystical erotic impulse. The idea of 'taking refuge' in god, one of the chief characteristics of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism, was first preached in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and subsequently reiterated in works like the *Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā* and the *Brahma Saṁhitā* (cf. *Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaranaṁ vraja – Gītā ; Īśvaraḥ paramaḥ Kṛṣṇaḥ saccidānanda vigrahaḥ—Brahma Saṁhitā*).

According to the Vaiṣṇavas, the *Bhāgavata* is the essence of all the *purāṇas*. The modern scholars think that the work in its present form is not the original one. It is of comparatively late origin. It is said to be a creation of the South. It is also said that the *cult of Bhakti* was first preached by the saints from the South. Of course, there are other views. The worship of the deity in the *kānta bhāva* (i.e., consort form) owes its origin in the South. Rāi Rāmānanda was the chief exponent of this *bhāva*. The *Kṛṣṇakarnāmṛta* and the songs of the *Āḷvārs* also refer to it. The concept of *kānta bhāva* (cf. *Ataeva gopībhāv kari aṅgīkār / Rātri dine cintā Rādhā-Kṛṣṇer vihār / /, —Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhyalīlā*).

According to Dr. S. K. De, the 'Caitanya sect' like other chief Vaiṣṇava sects originated from the tradition of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* (or simply the *Bhāgavata*) and owed a great deal for its development to the 'mystic emotionalism', interpreted and established by a class of emotional *sannyāsīs* from the time of Śrīdhara (*circa* 14th century A. D.)[35] The *Bhāgavata* ideals were popular in Bengal even in the pre-Caitanya times. To name a few, the following scholars engaged themselves in the study of the *Bhāgavata*, viz. Devānanda Paṇḍita, Ratnagarbha Ācārya and Mālādhara Vasu. It is said that they were followers of both Mādhavendra and his immediate disciples.

It is said that the principal exponents of the 'Caitanya sect' were the three *Vṛndāvana Gosvāmīs*—Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva. The theological presuppositions and esoteric doctrines were explained by Sanātana Gosvāmī in his learned commentary on the *Bhāgavata*. Rūpa Gosvāmī added two other works, viz. the *Laghubhāgavatāmṛta* and *Bhāgavatatattvasandarbha*. Rūpa Gosvāmī was also the compiler of a Sanskrit anthological work called, *Padyāvalī*. From a study of this as well as other works of the latter, it is clear that he was aware of the Vāiṣṇava theology of the pre-Caitanya times. But, even knowing the full history of the Vaiṣṇava faith and movement in Bengal, he wrote that the ideas of *Bhakti* as understood by Caitanya which was quite different from that of the *Vedas* and *Upanisads*. This was never preached by the lord in any of his previous incarnations.[36] There was certainly something novel in the *Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism*, which led a learned and thoughtful devotee like Rūpa Gosvāmī to say this. In his *Padyāvalī*, Rūpa Gosvāmī has arranged the verses in different sections according to the stages of the erotic career of Kṛṣṇa, and the whole arrangement conforms generally to the rhetorical classification of the Vaiṣṇava *Rasaśāstra*. It may be regarded that his citations are restricted to Vaiṣṇava authors.[37] He has *vaiṣṇavised* older verses, which were originally non-Vaiṣṇava, by making pretextual changes or by placing such verses in a *Vaiṣṇavite* context. All verses are devoted to Kṛṣṇa and the different aspects of his *līlā*[38] It is in many respects a unique work of medieval Bengal. Apart from its value as one of the well-known anthologies of Sanskrit literature, its connection with the Vaiṣṇava movement of Bengal gives it an added glory.

Caitanyaite Vaiṣṇavism can still be regarded as the quintessence of the ideas promulgated in the *Śāṇḍilya Sūtram*, the *Nārada Pañcarātra*, the *Bhagavadgīta* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. From a perusal of the following verses, an idea about the religious view of Śrīcaitanya may be formed:—

Ārādhyo Bhagavān Vrajeśa-tanaya-staddhāma Vṛndāvana-ramye kacidupāsanā Vrajavadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā/
Śāstraṁ Bhāgavataṁ pramāṇam-alaṁ-prema-pumārtomahān Śrī-Caitanya Mahāprabhormatamidam tatrodāro naḥ paraḥ//[39]

Vaiṣṇavism, as preached by Caitanya, created an unprecedented sensation and enthusiasm in Bengal and its neighbouring regions, like Orissa and Assam.[40]

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Chapter VI

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2 S. K. De, *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal,* Calcutta, 1942, pp. 20 ff., 78 ff.

3 Dr. J. N. Sarkar, *Chaitanya's Life and Teachings* (*Eng. Tr.* of *Chaitanya Charitāmṛta*). 2nd edn. p. xxi ff.

4 Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 4 ff.; Dr. D. C. Sen, *Chaitanya and His Age,* Calcutta, 1922, pp. 14-18, 31-36.

5 Kennedy, *ibid*, p. 1 ff; D. C. Sen, *ibid*, p. 52 ff.

6 D. C. Sen, *Vaishnava Literature of Mediaeval Bengal* (*V.L.M.B.*), Calcutta, 1917, p. 236 ff. and *Chaitanya and His Age* (*C.A.*), pp. 6-14.

7 D. C. Sen, *C.A.*, p. 45 ff.; Kennedy, *op. cit*, p. 9 ff.

8 Kennedy, *ibid*, pp. 38-39. As regards *Brahma Saṁhitā* it may be observed that an old MS. of this work has already been found from Nepāl. So, it will not be improper to observe that this work was popular in North-Eastern India, adjacent to Nepāl in or about 11th century A.D.

9 For a discussion of this point, see, D. C. Sen's *C.A.*, p. 259 ff; Bhudhar Ganguly on *Śrī Gaurāṅga, Bhārati*, p. 488; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-51.

10 Kennedy, *ibid*, pp. 6-8; also see, Monier-William's *Hinduism,* Reprint, Cal., 1951, pp. 96-100 and R. G. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism,* etc., p. 27 ff.

11 D. C. Sen, *C.A.*, pp. 41-42; Kennedy, *op cit.*, pp. 88-89; S. K. De, *Festschrift Moriz Winternitz* (*F.M.W.*) 1933, Leipzig, p. 198 ff; *Padyāvalī*, pp. vii-ix, 200 ff. and *Haraprasād Saṁvardhan Granthamālā* (*H.S.G.*), *Pt. II*, 1933. p. 76 ff.; *I.H.Q.*, *Vol.* 16, p. 370 ff.; also see S. K. De's *Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal,* Calcutta, 1942, pp. 9-10; Dr. B. B. Majumdar, *Chaitanya Chariter Upādān* (in Bengali) (C.U.), Calcutta, 1939. pp. 51, 440 ff., 571 ff., 579-80.

12 D. C. Sen, *C.A.*, pp. 41-52; Kennedy, *op. cit*, pp. 88-89; S. K. De, *F.M.W.*, p. 199 ff., *H.S.G.*, p. 76 ff. and *Padyāvalī*, p. vii ff.; I.C., Vol. 4, p. 429 ff.

13 Prabhat Mukherji, *V.S.P.P.*, 1343 B. S., p. 74 ff. Mr. Mukherji has drawn the attention of scholars to *Gauḍīya*, vol. I. No. 9, in his support.

14 S. K. De, *F.M.W.*, pp. 200-201.

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16 S. K. De, *F.M.W.* p. 199 ff.; *Padyāvalī*, p. vii ff.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

19 *Ibid*, pp. 202-04, 207; *Padyāvalī*, pp. vii-xi.

20 Mādhavendra has been likened to *Kṛṣṇabhakti-kalpataru* and *ādi-sūtradhārā* (V.I. & C.B.).

21 Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

22 Kennedy, *ibid*, p. 4 ff., 52-59, 60 ff.

23 *Ibid*, p. 53 ff.

24 *Ibid*, p. 57 ff.; also see, D. C. Sen in *C.A.*, p. 283 ff.

25 Kennedy; *op. cit.*, p. 58; also see, D. C. Sen's *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, p. 118, and *C. A.*, p. 276 ff.

26 Kennedy, *ibid*, pp. 54-59; also see, D. C. Sen in *C. A.*, pp. 278-83, 287.

27 *Ibid*. pp. 199-206; *Padyāvalī*, p. vii ff.; B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 440; D. C. Sen, *C. A.*, pp. 41-44.

28 D. C. Sen, *C. A.*, p. 283 ff., *V.L.M.B.*, pp. 222 ff., 272 ff; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-59, 120-22.

29 D. C. Sen, *ibid*, pp. 266-314, 320-33; Kennedy, *ibid*, pp. 52-59, 88-122.

30 Kennedy, *ibid*, pp. 6, 15, 94, 111, 221; S. K. De, *Padyāvalī*, pp. lxxii-iii, xcvi-cii.

31 Dr. A. Majumdar, *A.B.O.R.I.*, Vol. 36, pp. 230-57.

32 S. K. De, *Padyāvalī*, pp. lxv-vii.

33 *Ibid*, pp. lxiv-lxviii; *Kuppusvāmī Śāstri, Com. Vol.*, pp. 27-28.

34 *Ibid*. pp. lxxxii-ix.

35 S. K. De, *F.M.W.*, p. 202 ff, also see, *Padyāvalī*, p. ii ff.

36 *Stavamālā* by Jīva Gosvāmī, 3rd *Aṣṭaka*, 3rd verse.

37 S. K. De, *Padyāvalī*, pp. liii-lvi, also see, *I. H. Q.*, Vol. 8, pp. 643-88.

38 *Ibid*, pp. vii-viii, cii, cxi-cxiii.

39 Quoted in B. B. Majumdar's *Cait. Cariter Upādān* p. 520.

40 For this, see, Prabhat Mukherji's *Mediaeval Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa*, Calcutta, 1939; B. B. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, pp. 521 ff., 540 ff.

For a study of the religious disciplines, advocated by Rāmānuja, Madhava, Nimbārka, Vallabha and Caitanya, see, Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism etc.*, pp. 50-66, 76-86.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX—A

Origin and Development of the worship of Rādhā

An outstanding feature of medieval Vaiṣṇavism, as prevalent in Bengal, Assam, and Orissa, is the worship of Rādhā along with Kṛṣṇa. generally known as the *cult of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa*. Followers of Nimbārka and Viṣṇusvāmin also worshipped Rādhā in conjunction with Kṛṣṇa. There were other sects, viz. the *Śrī Vaiṣṇavas*, the *Mādhvas* and the *Viṭhobās* of Mahārāṣṭra, who did not accept Rādhā as a deity. It was Nimbārka (c. 13th century), who made the worship of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa exclusive in his sect. He was instrumental in exalting Rādhā as the eternal consort of Kṛṣṇa, a position which was held by Rukmiṇī in earlier Vaiṣṇavism. Another achievement of the sect was to free the concept of Rādhā from the immoral implications of a substantial part of medieval Vaiṣṇava literature, and allot her a dignified position in the Vaiṣṇava hierarchy. Two other important Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa sects, named after Caitanyadeva and Vallabhācārya respectively, sprang up in the 16th century A.D. Though, Vallabhācārya was nearer to Śaṅkara's monism in his philosophical outlook, his theology closely followed the Nimbārkite conception of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.[1]

Kṛṣṇa, the most perfect incarnation of Viṣṇu, is an ancient deity. Rādhā as a consort of Kṛṣṇa is not considered by scholars as of very ancient origin. Śrī, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Rukmiṇī etc. are said to have been the earlier consorts of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu. Now, the problem is—when did 'the cult of Rādhā' originate, and how did she come to be associated with Kṛṣṇa ?

At the very outset, it must be admitted that the origin of Rādhā has not yet been traced successfully, and much else about her is shrouded in mystery. Indeed, we are in the dark about the early history of the Rādhā legend. It has been

suggested by some scholars that the 'cult of Rādhā' began at Vṛndāvana in or about the 11th century A.D. and eventually spread throughout the north and then into the south. But, it will be unwise on our part to accept this view as an established truth. However, in our opinion the cult probably originated at a much earlier period. It may be that the Rādhā legend had its beginnings in the *Tamil Classics* of the *Sangam Age* and the *Hymns of the Āḷvārs*[6]. As regards the time and manner of the spread of 'the Rādhā cult' in Bengal, nothing can be said definitely. There is no history of the process; and literary records relating to it are far from complete. Some efforts may be made, however, to trace the history of the introduction of the cult in the following paragraphs.

Scholars have tried to trace the origin of the idea or conception of Rādhā even from the Vedic literature[4]. Some have again tried to trace the origin in some astrological lores. But, we can dismiss their views as idle fancies.[5]

Rādhā is not even mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and its *khila* (part) *Harivaṁśa*, though they deal with the dalliance (*Rāsakṛīḍā* or *Hallīṣaka*) of Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* on the bank of the Yamunā. The 'Kṛṣṇa-gopī' legend has been referred to in the earlier parts of the *Mahābhārata*. The legend develops in the *Harivaṁśa* and in the *purāṇas* like *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. One of the *Harivāṁśa* passages relating to the *Hallīṣaka* dance, given here as a synonym of *Rāsakrīḍā* may be quoted here. It is as follows: —

Tā vāryamāṇāḥ pitṛbhirbhātṛbhirmātṛbhistathā /
Kṛṣṇam gopāṅganā rātrau mṛgayante ratipriyāḥ / /
(Chap. 77, verse 4078, Vaṅgavāsī edn.)

In the *Mahāummagga Jātaka* and in some *purāṇas*, Kṛṣṇa is described as the husband of Jāmbavatī. In the said *Jātaka* Jāmbavatī is represented as a *caṇḍāla* maiden. The romantic Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend has its origin probably in this *Jātaka* story. In the opinion of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. 'the

romantic Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend with all its ramifications and local variations was developed during the second half of the first millenium A.D., over 1500 years after the days of the historical Kṛṣṇa, from the earlier story of his sojourn both as a child and a youth with the nomadic herdsman of Vṛndāvana and likely petty love-affairs with their girls during the period of his asylum with them'[6]. It seems to be a reasonable supposition.

Rādhā is not mentioned in some early purāṇic works like the *Vāyu, Matsya, Brahma, Varāha* and *Bhāgavata purāṇas*[7], though some of them refer to to the *gopīs*. Mention of Rādhā in some stray verses of the *Matsyapurāṇa* (*v.13-32*) is very doubtful. Some late *purāṇas* like the *Brahmavaivartta* and *Padma* (some portons) extol Rādhā. The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* verses referring to the *gopīs* (Madālasā and other unnamed *gopīs*) are no doubt very interesting (v. 21; V.13.29-40). The story of Māyavatī and Pradyumna, related in *V.27* of this *purāṇa*, possibly forms as the basis of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legends. The *Bālacarita* (*nāṭaka*) of poet Bhāsa refers to the love dalliances of Kṛṣna and the *gopīs*. According in Dr. Weller,[8] this drama is the earliest version of the Kṛṣṇa saga, for it does not deal with the erotic sentiment, so prominently associated with the later descriptions of Rādhā and the other *gopīs*. Dr. Sten Konow[9] ascribes this drama to an early date. This drama deals with a number of incidents relating to the different exploits of Kṛṣṇa including the killing of Kaṁsa. The Kṛṣṇa saga has been elaborately dealt with in the *Harivaṁśa* (appendix to the *Mahābhārata*), *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* and *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. In the opinion of Dr. Keith,[10] the source of the Kṛṣṇa saga may be traced in the earlier version of the *Mahābhārata* which was followed by the *Harivaṁśa* and the *purāṇas* like the *Viṣṇu* and the *Bhāgavata*. It is interesting to note that the *Bālacarita-nāṭaka*[11] has been mentioned in the Tamil epic, *Śilappadikāram*.[12] It may incidentally be mentioned that some scholars have tried to trace the origin of the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend in the *Iḷaṅkova-*

digal section of the *Śilappadikāram* (where a reference has been made to the *Bālacarita-nāṭaka*) where characters like Māyavan, Pinnai or Nāppinnai, and the 'Kuṛavaikuṭṭu' dance are mentioned. Māyavan and Pinnai or Nāppinnai stand respectively for Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. The 'Kuṛavaikuṭṭu' dance may as well stand for the *Hallīṣaka* or *Rāsa* dance (in the *Hymns of the Āḷvārs*, also, Nāppinnai, the foremost of the *gopīs*, has been mentioned). The *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* also refers to a 'premier' *gopī* (though, un-named). The *Act III* of the *Bālacarita* refers to the *Hallīṣaka* as an innocent village-dance. The *Act IV* of the same drama relates the incident of presentation of flowers to the *gopīs* by Kṛṣṇa. Names of the *gopīs* are given as Ghoṣa-sundarī, Vanamālā, Candralekhā and Mṛgākṣī (vide, *Acts III & IV*). Verse 3 of *Act III* refers to 'vundāvana', which has been emended by Drs. Woolner and Sarup as 'Vṛndāvana'.[13] But, the occurrence of the word 'Vṛndāvana' in such an early work, is highly improbable. However, the drama may be considered as an important source-book for compiling the early history of Vaiṣṇavism, for it supplies us the names of some of the girl-friends (the *gopīs*) of Kṛṣṇa. This is by far the earliest reference to the *gopīs*—some of whom became famous in later times as *sakhīs* of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.

The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa legend may be traced in the *Gāthā-Saptaśatī*,[14] also. The name of Rādhā, coupled with that of Kṛṣṇa, has come down to us from the ancient times ; and one of the earliest works, which has dealt with the love-dalliances of the divine pair was the *Gāthā Saptaśatī* (*Gāhā Sattasayi*) of Hāla, the Sātavāhana emperor. As regards the date of this king, scholars differ ; thus, while some would place him few centuries before Christ, others would do so some centuries after Christ. The *Gāthā Saptaśatī* (written in Mahārāṣṭrī Prākṛt) is an anthological work of great repute, and deals with the amours of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs* including Rādhā (I. 89 ; there are also faint references to the vanity of a particular *gopī*, who according to some is no other than

Rādhā, cf. verses *II. 14* & *V. 47*). Though the work was receiving additions down to the 8th century A.D., it must be said that the bulk of the work was composed before the 7th century A.D., the date of the poet Bāṇabhaṭṭa. Some verses from the *Gāthā Saptaśatī* have been freely quoted in the anthological works of the early medieval times.

Curiously enough, the *Pañcatantra*, a work of *circa* 6th century A.D., also refers to Rādhā while describing the love-dalliances of a weaver (disguised as Viṣṇu) with a princess (vide, *Story No. 5, Book I* in M. S. Apte's edition of the *Pañcatantra*).[15] Though, Rādhā is mentioned by name (in page 80) in this edition, no such reference can be found in the critically edited texts of the same by Professors Hertel and Edgerton.[16] M. Edouard Lancerean,[17] however, has not omitted the portion referring to Rādhā, while bringing out a brilliant French translation of this work. It is possible that Messrs. Apte and Lancerean have followed a recension different from that of Hertel and Edgerton.

The *Venīsaṁhāra* of Bhaṭṭa-Nārāyaṇa (*circa* 8th century A.D.) refers in a *Nāndī* verse (*I. 3*) to the dalliance (*Rāsa-krīḍā*) of Rādhikā (Rādhā) and her beloved Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Kaṁsa. The verse may be quoted here:—

Kālindyāḥ pulineṣu kelikupitāmuts-
ṛjya rāsa-rasam gacchantīmanu-
gacchato'śrukaluṣāṁ Kaṁsodviṣo Rādhikām/ etc.

This verse has been quoted in the *Dhvanyāloka* of Ānanda-vardhana (*circa* 9th century A.D.).[18]

Vākpatirāja, the author of *Gauḍavaho* (written sometime in the 8th century A.D.), mentions Rādhā in a solitary verse (I. 22), while describing the marks of her nails and bangles on the chest of Kṛṣṇa.[19]

The *Kuṭṭanīmatam*[20] (a work on erotics) of Bhaṭṭa Dāmodara, the minister of king Jayāpīḍa (the celebrated king of Kashmir, who flourished in the 8th century A. D.), has referred to the love-affairs of lord Kṛṣṇa (Murāri or Govinda)

and the 1600 *gopīs* (*'kāṁkṣanti Murārim ṣoḍaśa-gopīsahasram'* ...and *Govinda gopadāreṣu* etc). It is interesting to note that Vātsyāyana, an earlier writer on erotics, has referred to the *Hallīṣa* dance of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*.[21]

A woman named Rādhā, is mentioned in the famous *Mahāyānist* work, *Lalitavistara* (*ch. 18*), which was composed earlier than the 9th century A. D.[22]

Love-dalliance of Rādhā and Nārāyaṇa (Kṛṣṇa) has been referred to in the story Dhanakīrti, which forms a part of the *Yaśastilaka* of Somadeva, composed in the 10th century A. D. (*kiṁ na reme Rādhā Nārāyaṇena saha—VII. 26*).[23] Rādhā is also mentioned in works like the *Daśāvatāra-caritam*[24] of Kṣemendra (*circa* 11th century), *Kavīndravacana-samuccaya*[25] (an anthological work of *circa* 11th century). *Aṇargha-Rāghavam*[26] of Murāri Miśra (*circa* 12th century), *Āryā-Saptaśatī* of Govardhanācārya[27] (circa 12th century), *Gītagovinda*[28] of Jayadeva and the *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*[29] of Bilvamaṅgala-Līlāśuka (*circa* 12th century). Rādhā is also mentioned in the *Sarasvatī-kaṇṭhābharaṇa*[30] of Bhoja and *Śāradātilaka*[31] of Lakśmaṇa Deśikācārya (both belonging to 11th century). Though, the first dignified reference to Rādhā has been made in the *Gītagovinda*, other works like the *Naiṣadhacaritam*[32] of Śrīharṣa, (*cir.* 13th century), *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta*[33] of Śrīdharadāsa (1205 A. D.) and the *Nārada-Pañcarātra*[34] (*circa* 14th century) also, have given a prominent place to Rādha. The medieval Prākṛt works like the *Prākṛt-Kalpataru*[35] (between 12th century to 16th century) and *Prākṛt-Paiṅgalam*[36] (*circa* 15th century) contain many popular verses relating to the divine amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, thereby indicating immense popularity of the same in folk-literature and songs.

It is interesting to note that some *purāṇas*, *upapurāṇas* (e.g., the *Brahmavaivartta* and *Padma-purāṇas* and the *Devī-Bhāgavata*) and *tantras* of the medieval times have elaborately dealt with the amours of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. On the authority of some of these *tantras*, it may be said

that a sort of Rādhā-worship was started during the medieval times (e.g., we may refer to the *Rādhā-tantra*, *Bṛhad-Gautamīya-tantra* and *Sammohana-tantra*).[37]

Not only the literary accounts, the inscriptions and sculptural specimens also, depict the amours of of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. The *Pabhosā inscription*[38] (*circa* 7th or 8th century), which refers to the image-makers of Śrīkṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, may be cited as an example. The *Belāva inscription* also, refers to Kṛṣṇa, 'who dallies with hundreds of gopīs' (*gopīśata-kelikāra*).[39] Another inscription of the same period and issued by king Vanamāladeva of Assam refers to lord Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu), who was delighted by the *gopīs* (*gopījanānandita-mānasasya*).[40] Three inscriptions of king Vākpati Muñja of Mālava, issued respectively in A. D. 974, 982 and 986, contain verses in honour of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa (Māra), Lakṣmī and Rādhā.[41] On the evidence of these inscriptions, it may be observed that at the end of the 10th century A. D. Rādhā and Laksṃī were not considered by many as identical, but distinct entities. From a study of these epigraphs, it is clear that Kṛṣṇa was worshipped along with the *gopīs* in the early medieval times. They point to the prevalence of a '*gopī*-cult' during this period. Later on, it (*gopī*-cult) emerged into the Rādhā-cult. Some beautiful sculptures or sculptural panels depicting the love-dalliances of Kṛṣṇa and *gopīs* (also Rādhā) have been found all over India (for this see, *Chaps. 1 & 2* of this work).

In the following paragraphs, an account of the divine sports of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, as described in the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* (*Rāsapañcādhyāya* section. X. 29-33), may be given. But, the *Mādhvas* do not put any reliance on it (i.e., the section mentioned above). However, it is clear from a study of this *purāṇa* that a particular *gopī* (who is described as the 'premier' *gopī*) was considered as the most beloved of Kṛṣṇa. Though, the name of Rādhā cannot be found in the above work, the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal would find a veiled reference to her in the expression, '*anayā-Rādhito nūnam Bhagavān*

Harirīśvara', v. 28 Chapter X). But it is a matter of interpretation. In his *Siddhānta-pradīpa-ṭikā*, the commentator, Viśvanātha Chakravarty has explained away '*Rādhitaḥ*' as '*Rādhām itaḥ=prāptaḥ*'. But, Sanātana Gosvāmī in his *Vaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī-ṭīkā* of the *Bhāgavata* has read the term '*rādhitaḥ*' as '*ārādhitaḥ*', and explained it away as '*Ārādhya =vaśīkṛtya Rādhayati=ārādhayatīti-Rādheti nāmakaraṇañca darśitam*'//[43]

If we accept the explanation as offered by Viśvanātha Chakravarty, then we can somehow account for the predominance of Rādhā in *Rāsa* dance of the laterday Vaiṣṇava literature. However, scholars do not put much reliance upon this explanation inasmuch as Śrīdhara Svāmin, the noted commentator of the *Bhāgavata*, has nowhere mentioned Rādhā in his commentary. But, it should be pointed out here that as Śrīdhara was a *Mādhva* ascetic, it was but natural for him to omit references to Rādhā. Everybody knows that Rādhā has no place in the *Mādhva* sect so far as the devotional aspect of the same is concerned. The *Caitanyaites* consider the commentary of the *Bhāgavata* by Śrīdhara to be an authoritative one. It is believed that the *Bhāgavata* was composed in the South, most probably in the Pāṇḍya country in comparatively early times. In the opinion of Farquhar, 'it was written in 900 A.D. (probably earlier) in the Tamil country'.[44] There are other scholars, viz. Dr. R. C. Hazra,[45] who would ascribe the earliest parts of the *Bhāgavata* (*III*. 30, *VII*. 11-13, *XI*. *17-18*, *XII*. *14-15*) to the 1st half of the 6th century A.D.[46] The *Rāsapañcādhyāya* section of the *Bhāgavata* cannot be placed so early. It may reasonably be supposed that work was composed in the 8th century A.D. On the testimony of sculptural pieces and inscriptional records, it has already been shown that Rādhā was known in the 8th century A.D. Now, the question is—why did'nt the *Bhāgavata*, a work of the 8th century A.D., refer to Rādhā?. It is a difficult question to answer. Most probably the author of the *Bhāgavata* did not know the name of Rādhā. Or, it may be that though

her name was known to the author, he purposely avoided it. This avoidance might have been due to the fact that he was opposed to *the cult of Rādhā* (which probably started in the early medieval times), and he did not like to attach any importance to it. In the *Bhāgavata*, the *gopīs* are shown as equal in rank or order, so all of them are allowed to enjoy union with Kṛṣṇa. Hence, no special privilege (or prominence) has been shown to any one of them. Non-mention of Rādhā in the *Bhāgavata* may be due to other reasons also, one of which may be elaborated here. As the *Bhāgavata* is believed to be a product of the South, where the *cult of Rādhā* was possibly not prevalent at the time of its composition, it would have been impossible on the part of the South Indian composer (who had no idea about the cult) to refer to Rādhā in the work. Critics may say that Rādhā has been mentioned in the *Gātha Saptaśatī* of Hāla. But, some scholars consider the verses referring to Rādhā to be interpolated ones. Verses composed even in the 8th century A.D. have been included in this work. So, it may not be improper to observe that the *Rādhā cult* possibly did not flourish in the South before the 8th century A.D.—the time of the composition of the *Bhāgavata*. Or, it may be that as the *Rādhā cult* was probably considered to be a comparatively new one during the time of the composition of the *Bhāgavata*, the author of the same did not feel the necessity of its inclusion (in it). But, we may discover the origin of the legend in the story of Nāppinai of the *Śilappadikāram*.

The first full-fledged literary work on the love-dalliance of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā was the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva of the 12th century A.D. Afterwards, many works were composed in Bengal and in other states on this theme. Speaking particularly of Bengal, it may be said that in or about the 12th century A.D., a band of poets, who graced the court of king Lakṣmaṇasena, composed many new love-poems, both on devotional and secular topics. As Rādhā played an equally important part with Kṛṣṇa in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism

in Bengal, it was but natural that the poets would compose new poems on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme, and would create new situations in the life-story of Kṛṣṇa to suit motives—both religious and literary. Some scholars think that the poets, who wrote poems on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, were not necessarily Vaiṣṇavite by faith. They wrote classical poems just as they wrote love poems on other worldly affairs.[47] The love-romance of young Kṛṣṇa, the most beautiful among the cowherds, found expression in sweet pastoral songs which were popular among the cowherds. For example, we may quote a verse of poet Varddhamāna from the *Sadukti-karṇāmṛta*, viz. *Vatsa tvaṁ navayauvano'si capalāḥ prāyeṇa gopastriyaḥ*/&c., *Kṛṣṇa-yauvanam-3*. In this context we like to refer to the Ābhīras, among whom Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa was born. The love-episode of this romantic hero and the married as well unmarried cowherdesses were well-known to the Ābhīras. In the opinion of Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, 'the dalliance of Kṛṣṇa with cowherdesses, which introduced an element inconsistent with the advance of morality into the Vāsudeva religion, was also an after-growth, consequent upon the free intercourse between the wandering Ābhīras and their more civilised neighbours. Morality cannot be expected to be high or strict among races in the condition of the Abhīras at the time, and their gay neighbours took advantages of its looseness. Besides, the Ābhīra women must have been fair and handsome as those of the Āhir-Gavāliāyas or cowherds of the present day are'.[48] But, Dr. S. B. Dasgupta does not see much truth in the view of Bhandarkar, as it is based on mere surmise.[49] The love stories, in the opinion of the former, do not always accord with the existing customs of the society. The cowherdesses, whom Kṛṣṇa loved, were but married wives of the cowherds, and hence they should be treated as *parakīyās*. As the *parakīyā* mistress of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā was given the status of a married wife of the latter in the medieval Vaiṣṇava literature. It is the Vaiṣṇava *Sahajiyās*, who consider Rādhā to be an unmarried wife of Kṛṣṇa.

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Appendix—A

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APPENDIX—B

Images of Viṣṇu and His Incarnations

Before we could make a detailed survey of the extant images of Viṣṇu and his incarnations, found in Bengal and its neighbourhood, it is meet and proper that we should also discuss here, at length, about the images of the Hindus in general.

There is no way denying it that images are necessary for the ritualistic worship of the followers of the cults. It is certain that the images, used by the Hindu worshippers in their religious rites symbolized in a way their concept about a god his various aspects, and these cult-objects were primarily nothing but the consecrated symbols of the divinities. The *Arcā* (divine images for worship was to them one such manifestation of the god, and the devout *Bhāgavatas* considered the duly consecrated images of their god as so many of his *Avatāras*. There are many texts, where a great deal of emphasis is laid on the ideology behind the individual images ; and the *Viṣṇudharmottara purāṇa* may be regarded as one of such representative texts.

According to Śrī-Rāmānujācārya, the great Vaiṣṇava preacher from the South, God (Viṣṇu) must always be thought of in two aspects—one, Supreme Being, beyond our ordinary comprehension but thought of by man as existing in the sacred Vaikuṇṭha ; and the other, the personal aspect of the Supreme. In regard to the latter aspect, it is generally held that god manifests himself in various forms and any of his divine forms merely has assumed five special types, viz. *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin* and *Arcā*.[1]

It will be profitable to compare the viewpoint about the usefulness of the images with those presented in the works of the *Bhāgavatas* and the *Pañcarātras*. The terms, *vigraha*, *tanu*, *bera*, *rūpa* &c., are used in Vaiṣṇava texts which express deep loving faith for Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu and his different aspects. The manner of describing euphemestically the images as the

very bodies or forms of the god is fully emphasised therein by the prescription that the cult-picture of the deity was one of his five-fold forms, *Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmin* and *Arcā*. *Para* stands for four emanatory forms, *Vibhava* for 39 incarnatory forms, *Antaryāmin* for inner-controller of the beings and *Arcā* for the images of which are termed as *vigrahas* or very bodies. Now, the problem is—what is the idea behind the image worship? The primary purpose, for which the images were usually intended, was a handy medium—image or icon or any such visible symbol of the deity—through which a sectary could transfer his *ekātmikā bhakti* to his god. Secondarily, the images were made for such purposes as *ābhicāra* &c. The rendering of one's homage was done by various acts of *pūjā*, in which images were absolutely necessary. These were: (a) *abhigamana*, (b) *upādāna*, (c) *ijyā* or worship of *Śrī-vigraha*, (d) *svādhyāya* and (e) *yoga* (it has got a special bearing upon the history of the development of Hindu Iconography).

Images of no god other than Viṣṇu should be represented as reclining. Majority of Viṣṇuite images are of the *sthānaka* variety. The *āsanamūrttis* of Viṣṇu also are not very rare.

In the *Pañcarātra* texts, it has been pointed out that the Viṣṇuite images can be divided into three groups, viz. *Para*, *Vyūha* and *Vibhava*. The *Dhruvaberas*, described in the *Vaikhānasāgama*, most probably symbolizes in a way the first group. According to the *Vaikhānasāgama*, the *Dhruvaberas* of Viṣṇu may be divided and subdivided into *36* (total number). These stereotyped divisions and subdivisions are as follows: —

(a) *yoga*, *bhoga*, *vīra* and *abhicārika*, according to the particular kind of result desired by the worshipper (*4 broad grs.*);

(b) *sthānaka*, *āsana* and *śayana*, based on the particular attitude in which the principal figure is shown (4×3=*12 sub-grs.*);

(c) *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama*, based upon the number of accessory figures in the composition clustering round the central figure—($4 \times 3 \times 3 = 36$ sub-grs.)[2].

As regards the first group, it may be observed that while *vīra* and and *abhicārika* forms are rare (only the *abhicārika sthānaka-mūrtti* has since been recognised by Dr. J. N. Banerjea in the Viṣṇu image, found at Chaitanpur, dt. Burdwan); *yoga* and *bhoga* varieties (particularly, the last one) have been found in hundreds and thousands.[3] An image of *yoga* variety, if lavishly decorated, may be aptly described as one of *bhoga* variety. As the acquisition of wealth and prosperity is the general desire of the people, images of *bhoga* variety were abundantly made. The *yoga mūrttis* are prescribed for the commonfolk and the *abhicārika* for inflicting defeat and death on enemies. While, the *bhoga* and *vīra* varieties of images may be worshipped in temples inside villages or towns (the *vīra* varieties may be worshipped outside villages or towns), the remaining two varieties should be worshipped outside such villages or towns (the *abhicārika* variety should be worshipped in forests, mountains &c). The first three varieties of this group may be termed as *saumya* (pacific) and the last as *ugra* (terrific). Among the images of Viṣṇu, Paraśurāma, Nṛsiṁha, Viśvarūpa and Vaṭapatraśāyin (I wonder why Varāha is not considered as such are considered to be *ugra-mūrttis*. The images can further be divided into four groups, viz. *vyakta* (i.e., manifest, being curved in round), *mukhaliṅga* (i.e. half represented upto chest), *vyaktāvyakta*s (i. e., manifest, yet non-manifest), and *avyakta* (i. e., non-manifest) like *liṅgas*—Śālagrāma and Bāṇaliṅga.

Images can still be divided into three groups, such as *cala* (movable), *acala* (immovable) and *calācala* (movable-cum-immovable). The *cala* images are made of metal, and thus are easily portable, and consist of *kautuka-beras* (which are meant for *arcanā*), *utsava-beras* (which are taken out

on festive occasions in procession) & *bali-beras* (which are employed in relation to the purposes of offering *bali*).[4] The *acala* images are commonly known as *mūlavigrahas*, which are generally made of stone and permanently fixed in the central shrine. Before we could detail upon the extant images of Viṣṇu, found in Bengal and its neighbouring regions, it is fair that we should add here a few lines about the installation-ceremony of images as without this they would not be regarded as regular objects of worship.[5] So, in order to fulfil the purpose, for which it was made, an image had to be consecrated as an *Arcāvatāra* of the highest, and then at one auspicious day, specified for this purpose (generally in bright fortnight in the period of 'Summer Solstice' and during certain particular positions of the planets and asterisks, in days other than Tuesday and in a time particularly auspicious to the donor of the image), the *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* ceremony of the god was done with appropriate *mantras*.[6] In this way only a work of art could become the visible body, being suggestively animated by the divine presence.

Elaborate rituals are prescribed in some early and late texts for their consecration and installation (please see, *Chapter 59* of *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* ; *Saṁkarṣaṇa Kāṇḍa* of *Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra* ; chapters on *Mūrtti-pratiṣṭhā* in different *purāṇas*, *Śilpaśāstras*, *Āgamas* ; and 18*th Vilāsa* of the *Haribhaktivilāsa*). In the installation ceremony of sectarian gods and goddesses like Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, some importance is given to *Vedic* ritualism and in the preliminary consecration, the *Aindra* and *Agni mantras* are to be chanted in the accompaniment of the *Vedic homa*. The *mantras*, particularly to the deity whose image is being installed, should also be recited at that time. But the installation of a sectarian deity should be performed by a sectarian-initiate. Thus we see, that the images of Viṣṇu should be installed by a *Bhāgavata*.[7]

The time when images became the objects of worship in Bengal cannot be determined with certainty. It is in a way

bound up with the larger problem of the antiquity of image-worship in India on which widely divergent views have been entertained by scholars. It is not necessary for our present purpose to discuss the question at length. But, it does not seem likely that the image-worship occupied an acknowledged and important place in the religious life of Bengal till the introduction of various sectarian religions of which *Bhakti* or loving adoration of the personal god by his devotees formed the fundamental element. Images were at first made mostly of perishable materials like wood or clay.

Extant images of Viṣṇu, discovered from Bengal, may go back even to the Kushāṇa period. Such images of earlier periods have also been found from other regions of India. From the prevalence of such images, it can be presumed that Vaiṣṇavism was very popular in India. The divine power and heroic feats of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, a component part of the composite cult-picture comprising Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva-Nārāyaṇa-Gopāla (-Kṛṣṇa), were everywhere extolled and demonstrated in sculptures and iconic representations. Sculptures from Mathurā and Tumain and a four-armed Viṣṇu from Hāṅkrail (Dt. Maldah) are some real specimens of the Kushāṇa period. The 'Hāṅkrail' Viṣṇu is a relief like free-standing sculpture, and is sparsely decorated. The Kushāṇa period was the epoch of formative ideas and new experiments in the sphere of art and iconography. The *purāṇic* concepts of Hindu gods and goddesses were expressed through the media of stone, clay or painting. This led to the growth of a complex pantheon of deities comprising Viṣṇu, Śiva, Lakṣmī or Śrī etc. In the course of successive periods, forms, attributes, accessory details, vehicles, decoration etc. of the deities came to be fixed ; and the Gupta artists and sculptors had no difficulty in giving expression to the well-defined conventions and iconographic canons detailed during this period. The mythical conceptions of religious and metaphysical import like the Kṛṣṇa saga were translated into lithic visualization by the art-engravers of this period (cf.

temples of Mathurā, Māṇḍor and Deogarh). These were done with genuine simplicity. The colossal Varāha image at Udayagiri is a monument to the genius of the Gupta sculptors.

The best qualities of Gupta plastic art may be studied in a superb example of Viṣṇu, carved in round, from Mathurā with the face revealing a serene spiritual beauty. The figure is sparsely decorated and wears a diaphanous drapery. Ornaments like *ekāvalī*, *vaijayantī* etc. are also there. The 'Gupta statuary, also, shows for the first time images of the cosmic form of Viṣṇu combining a human-head with that of a boar and a lion' (rt. and lt.). These are images of Nṛsiṁha and Varāha-Viṣṇu. The cosmic aspect of *Viśvarūpa* of this god is also discernible in the central human figure of an eight armed Viṣṇu from Garhwā, which is surrounded by numerous other heads.[7a] The *āyudhas* of Viṣṇu became personified for the first time in the Gupta age.

In the Gupta age, we see that the images of gods and goddesses had a sense of vigour, power and strength, welded by a classicism, which came of self-restraint, blended with naturalism as well as refined and idealistic touches.[8]

Kings and prosperous devotees of the Gupta age, who were anxious to express their faith in this pantheon through the beautiful images, inspired the artists to create individual masterpieces.

In Bengal, images of the Gupta period have occasionally been discovered. Among those discovered, mention may be made of Bihārail 'Buddha' from Rajshahi, which may be compared with the images of Sārnāth.

Travelling eastward, the Gupta art of Magadha led in course of time to the evolution of the *'Pāla School'* in Bengal (c. 800-1200 A. D.). Very few images have been discovered in Bengal which show that they were carved out in the post-Gupta or pre-Pāla period. For example, we may refer to the Viṣṇu images from Maldah and Lakṣmaṇkāṭi, which are the reminiscent of Gupta art. This shows that the artists of Bengal were followers of the decadent Gupta style of

Magadha. Some terracotta seals, belonging to the pre-Pāla period, have been discovered from Rājghāt, Ahicchatrā, Bhīṭā (U. P.), Basārh (Bihar), Rājāsan and Sābhār (East Bengal), which show the representations of some deities and figures, carved out or modelled in the Gupta style.[9]

The home of the art of the Pāla and Sena dynasties are the modern provinces of Bengal and Bihar. Some dedicatory inscriptions on reliefs or on fragments of reliefs, dated during the Pāla-Sena times, have been found from different regions.[10] It has been observed by some scholars that the Pāla rulers did not personally patronise the art, though various art-objects were made during their reign-periods. Donors, too, according to them, had no personal relation to the work of art, and were only interested in the dedication itself through which they expected to acquire religious merit. During the Sena period religious life was saturated with a 'luxurious worldliness', so the art of the Senas is replete with sensuousness and belongs to 'the world and court in spite of religious subjects'.[11] Well-fixed tradition about the appearance of the image yields a solid and reliable frame-work with the help of which the religious experience is evoked in the worshipping devotee according to the rules that are familiar to the craftsmen.

Art within these four centuries (c. 800-1500 A. D.) seems to have been produced organically within a well-surrounded district, of which the limits and chief factors are the court, the cult, the lay community and the workshops.[12]

The images of the aforesaid period were not produced by ameteur artists, but by a class of professional sculptors (e. g., we may refer to *Vārendraka śilpī-goṣṭhī* in the *Khālimpur Inscription* of king Dharmapāla). Some of these sculptors had been successful in producing beautiful and unique images, marked by gracefulness, manliness and loveliness.

During the Pāla age Buddhism and *Brāhmạnical* from of Hinduism existed side by side in the Sena period the reactionary tendency of Brāhmanical faith against Buddhism was noticed.

A close study of the religious history of the Pāla-Sena times would clearly indicate that all religious cults including Buddhism were imbued with *Tāntricism*. With the degeneration of Buddhism, a number of Buddhist deities, corresponding to similar personifications of abstract qualities in the orthodox Hindu or Brāhmanical pantheon, were incorporated into it. Thus, we see that a Viṣṇu image of the 12th century A. D., does not differ much from that of a Bodhisattva in features or in composition.[13]

Numerous images of Viṣṇu and other deities of Brāhmanical pantheon have been found in Bengal and her suburbs. Most of these images belong to *circa* 11th and 12th century A.D. Very few images of the pre-Pāla period have so far been discovered ; and the images which can be dated in the Pāla period are mostly Buddhistic in character. The images of the Brāhmanical faiths became immensely abundant in the 11th-12th century A.D. This was particularly true in the case of Viṣṇuite icons. This shows how popular this god was during the pre-Muslim times. Numerous images of Viṣṇu have been discovered from tanks or ditches. This was due to the Muslim invasion. Thus, though the art perished, the productions of art were saved to some extent.[14] But, an altogether different fate overtook the images, which were worshipped in the temples lying above the ground. They became the easy target for the iconoclastic fury of the Muslim invaders. Thus, we see that the followers of the Islam had smashed most of the extant images and left few images which can be definitely pointed to the pre-Muslim days. They have also left little room for creative genius that would have been required for producing new ones. In this way we can explain away the paucity of pre-Pāla and early Pāla images in Bengal and its adjoining regions, e.g., Bihar.

It has been already mentioned that the Gupta art, while travelling eastward, i. e. towards Bengal, led to the evolution of the *Pāla School* in the beginning of the 9th century A.D. This is quite true. From a close study of the medieval

sculptures, found in the north-eastern provinces of India, comprising Bengal and Bihar as also a part of Eastern U. P., and whose influences are discernible in the art-objects in bronze etc. of the outlying provinces of India like Nepal and Tibet, it is quite clear that a new school of sculpture rose in this region during the later part of medieval period. The rise of this School generally known as the '*Pāla School*', though some would like to call it as '*Eastern India School of Medieval Sculpture*, (A.D. 800-1200), must have taken place just after the formation of the '1st Empire' of the Pālas, i.e., in the 9th century A. D. Late R. D. Banerji, who spared no pains to examine a good many inscribed specimens exhibited in museums and other places, has opined that the aforesaid School continued to 'produce art-objects till the end of the 12th century A. D.'[15] It has been noticed that the most East Indian specimens, which can be definitely assigned to the 9th and 10th century A. D., come from South Bihar and parts of East Bengal. Though, the vigour of expression and correctness of delineation of the ninth century is absent in the tenth, in the aforesaid School we do not find any existence of *norm* or standard in the same. In the ninth-tenth century and after, there was a revival of artistic activity in East Bengal; and the artists of this region were able to produce exquisite art-objects, which on account of delicacy of outline and expressiveness of form might be claimed as better than the contemporary specimens of the northern as well as western parts of Bengal.

The artistic activity in Bengal and South Bihar received a set-back in the hands of invaders from outside Bengal, viz. the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the Kāmbojas, the Kaḷachuris and the Colas, who led expeditions to the said regions during the reign periods of king Nārāyaṇapāla and others. However, the building of the '*2nd Pāla Empire*' under king Mahīpāla I brought back an artistic renaissance in North Bengal. But, the artists of this region were decidedly in a minority, if compared with those of East Bengal and South Bihar. The new style, which

rose in North Bengal in *circa* 11th century A. D., was a descendant of the old, i. e., the style which rose with the building of the '*1st Pāla Empire*' in the 9th-10th century, but lacked the vigour of the 8th (i. e., pre-Pāla and early Pāla). The 11th century specimens from North Bengal show that rigid canons of the *Śilpaśāstra* were not adhered to ; and artists were allowed to show their individual dexterity. Though, North Bengal was not able to compete with East Bengal in producing art-objects of rare merit, she showed every effort to throw away the servile obedience to the tenets of the older school based on the *Śilpaśāstras*, and went on producing images bearing a stamp of forceful delineation and broad vision.[16]

But, the glory of the North Bengal style was shortlived; for internal troubles within the Pāla empire during the latter half of the 11th century A. D. and presence of challenging powers in the soil of Bengal caused serious handicaps to the artistic activity of North Bengal. So, once again, we see South Bihar and East Bengal taking a lead in the field of artistic activity and producing various images during the latter half of the 11th century and the first half of the 12th century under the patronage of king Rāmapāla and the early rulers of the Sena dynasty.[17] But, soon the table turned; for during the 2nd half of the 12th century A. D., we see the prevalence of 'degraded, mean and disproportionate images. The slavish adherence to the rules of the *Śilpaśāstras* gradually levelled all peculiar characteristics of the locality; and in the 12th century it was difficult to distinguish an image of Bihar School from that of East Bengal.[18] In spite of that a unique metal *Viṣṇupaṭṭa* of *circa* 12th century A. D., bearing the figure of four-armed Viṣṇu in the centre and ten incarnations on ten petals of a lotus, has been discovered from Rangpur District and now being preserved in the *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum*. Worship of *Viṣṇupaṭṭas* of this type and the *Vaiṣṇava Yantras* (also preserved in the *V. R. S. Museum*) in this period points to the popularity of the *Tāntric* worship of

Viṣṇu in Bengal.[19] But, with the rise of popular worship of Kṛṣṇa under the leadership of Śrīcaitanya in the 16th century A. D., the *Tāntric* form fell into disuse in Bengal. At the end of the 12th century A. D., i. e., with the Muslim conquest of Bihar and Bengal, the artistic activity in the true sense of the term came to an end in Bihar and West Bengal comprising the empire of the Pālas and the Senas. But, the Pāla art did not perish altogether; for certain artists and craftsmen from Bengal and Bihar, who took refuge in Nepāl after the Muslim invasion of Eastern India, developed a brilliant tradition therein.

Recent discoveries from East Bengal and North Bengal prove that the artistic activity, though subdued, continued upto the middle of the 14th century in East Bengal and the 16th century in the North. In some other places hideous figures were created in the name of art. This shows that the sculptors or artists of Bengal did not continue the traditions of the pristine glory of the '*Pāla School*'.[20]

The artists of East Bengal and other regions of Bengal had to take recourse to the use of wood, terracotta, clay and paper for want of stone. In this way, we see, that the Muslim invasion paralysed the artistic activity of Bengal and Bihar.

'Throughout 'the length of the dominions of the Pālas', i.e., Bihar, Bengal and a part of the U.P., images of various deities belonging to Buddhistic and Brāhmanical pantheons have been found in large numbers. Of these, the images of Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva outnumber other classes of images. 'If the number of images in stone and metal is to be regarded as a criterion for the study of the historical development of the Brāhmanical religion, then it must be admitted that both in Magadha and Bengal the Bhāgavata sect of the Vaishṇavas flourished vigorously from the beginning of the eleventh century A.D.' .The majority of images of Viṣṇu, found in the aforesaid regions, are representations of the Vāsudeva variety—in which the deity is shown as holding a mace in the upper

right hand and a lotus in the lower, while the upper left and the lower hands hold the wheel and the conch.[21]

The Pālas, though Buddhists, did not discourage the carving of Brāhmanical images ; but, during the Sena ascendancy in Bengal and Bihar, there arose a powerful reaction against Buddhism. There was a revival of all branches of Hinduism including Vaiṣṇavism in this period.

'While thousands of images of different varieties of the four-armed Vishṇu, belonging to the eleventh and twelfth centuries have been discovered in different parts of Bengal and Bihar, only a single specimen of the combined image of Krishṇa and Rādhā can safely be assigned to the Eastern School during its long existence. The locality of this specimen is unknown, but it belongs to the Broadley collection of Bihar is a specimen of the eleventh century A.D.[22] Thus, we see that there was a great scarcity of combined images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in the Eastern School. From the beginning of the 15th century A.D., there was a total absence of images of Viṣṇu; and only images of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa have been found. Thus, there was 'a hiatus in the history of the Vaishṇava sect in North-Eastern India from the twelfth to the fifteenth century A.D. to fill up which iconography can supply no materials.'[23] Even after this, the artists of North and East Bengal were found engaged in making image of Viṣṇu in old style, both in wood and stone. Now-a-days, 18th century figures of Bāla-Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā Lakṣmī and Vaiṣṇavī, carved in bronze or brass or wood, can be found in Bengal in large numbers.

In the subsequent paragraphs, we like to deal with the extant images of *Daśāvatāras* of Viṣṇu.[24]

Ten Incarnations (Daśāvatāras) of Viṣṇu

'The term 'Avatāra' is applied to the act of the god coming down in the form of a man or an animal to the earth and living there in that form till the purpose for which he had descended in the universe was fulfilled; it also sometimes

denotes the assumption of different forms by the god for the attainment of particular objects. The earliest references as to the assumption of some forms by the divinity for the attainment of particular ends are to be found in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, where Prajāpati is said to have assumed Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha forms on different occasions for the furtherance of creation and the well-being of the created. When the 'doctrine of incarnations' and its association with Viṣṇu was well-established, all these three were bodily transferred to that composite god, and were regarded as some of his celestial incarnations. The Indian ideology about the *Avatāra* of the 'Divine Being' is, however, briefly but clearly expounded in two verses of the *fourth chapter* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. It does not rightly specify the number of the divine incaranations, for the god 'creates himself age after age as the conditions in the universe demand.' The number of these *Avatāras* gradually came to be stereotyped as ten (*Daśāvatāras*). In the epics, *purāṇas* and *Pañcarātra* texts, one can find not only all the stereotyped ten, whose icons are common, but also many other *Avatāras* whose images, though uncommon, are also known, viz. Haṁsa, Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Rāma-Dāśarathī, Rāma-Bhārgava, Sātvata (Vāsudeva or Baladeva) and Kalkī (*Mbh., XII. 349. 104*). Absence of the Buddha in this list is to be specially noticed here. The stereotyped list of the ten incarnations is to be found in the *Varāha* and *Agni purāṇas*. The *Vāyu purāṇa* list, though contains the names of ten *Avatāras*, does not tally with the stereotyped one. Sometimes, it is *six*; sometimes, again, it is extended to 22 or 23 including Ṛṣabha. The accepted list of ten incarnations is generally followed in Bengal with slight variations. Jayadeva, the 12th century court-poet of king Lakṣmaṇasena, has also given the same list. The Sanskrit verse containing the list of the ten incarnations may be quoted below:—

Matsyaḥ Kūrmo Varāhaśca
Narasiṁho' tha-Vāmanaḥ/,

Rāmo Rāmaśca Rāmaśca
Buddhaḥ Kalkīṅi te daśa//.

The order of these ten incarnations were generally observed during the Pāla-Sena times. But, sometimes, the chronological order was violated.

Numerous iconographic illustrations of most of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu have been found all over India, specially in the North and the East.

Some of the aforesaid incarnations have been borrowed from Prajāpati-Brahmā, Indra and Varuṇa. Viṣṇu's relations with some animals (included in the above list) are also worthnoting.[25] It cannot be denied that these animals are specially 'divine,' so their potentiality of being worshipped is not at all surprising. Thus, they were actually worshipped in India, often, having been incorporated in different cults including that of Viṣṇu. The religious history of the other parts of the world, also, shows that some of these animals were worshipped there, too.

Of the ten incarnations three, viz. Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha are theriomorphic; one, viz. Nṛsiṁha therio-anthropomorphic, and the rest like Vāmana etc. anthropomorphic. Kūrma played an important part in the cosmogonic, cosmographic and genealogical conceptions of the Indian people. Viśvarūpa, a special form of Viṣṇu is also cosmogonic in character. Kūrma and Varāha are associated with the 'Fertility cult.' Balarāma seems to have some association with the Primitive Snake, Ananta. He has also some agricultural and bucolic traits.

Some of the incarnations are legendary heroes, while others are historical (barring Nṛsiṁha). The five legendary incarnations, viz. Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and Vāmana, can be traced back to the *Vedic* literature (Vāmana in *R. V.*, I. 22.18., and *Tait. Saṁ* and *Tait. Ār.*; Kūrma in A.V. and *Vāj. Saṁ*; Matsya in *Śat. Br.* 7. 5. 1; Varāha in *Tait. Saṁ* and *Tait Br.*; and Nṛsiṁha in *Tait. Ār.*). Of the human incarna-

tions of Viṣṇu—Paraśurāma may be considered as the symbol of militant *Brāhmanism*; Rāma, the noblest ideal of *Kṣatriya* manhood; Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, the representatives of *agricultural folk* and *Kṣatriya* princedom respectively, bent on protecting the righteous and chastising the wicked; Buddha, the 'deluder of the Śākyas'; and Kalkī, the symbol of the militant *Brāhmanism*, bent on eradicating the evil of *Kali era*.'[6]

Some of these incarnations, it may be noticed, figure as the revealer or chief hero of a *purāṇa*. Thus, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Vāmana have each one principal *purāṇa*, attached to their respective names. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* may be taken as the *purāṇas* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa respectively. The *Bhāgavata* and other *purāṇas* also deal with Kṛṣṇa. Other incarnations like Nṛsiṁha, Kalkī and Bhārgava-Paraśurāma have each one *upa-purāṇa*, assigned to their respective names.

Of the ten incarnations—Varāha, Nṛsiṁha and Vāmana are the three, whose sculptures are numerous. Images of Matsya and Paraśurāma are not rare, and of the rest—Rāma, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, they are numerous.

As to the efficacy of worshipping the different *Avatāras* of Viṣṇu, it is said that a man who wishes:—

(a) 'to obtain indifference to worldly objects and supra-normal *yoga*-power must worship'—Matsya and Kūrma;

(b) 'to effect a prosperous condition of the king and the kingdom'—Varāha;

(c) 'to destroy enemies and barbarians, and desire to be invincible'—Nṛsiṁha;

(d) 'to obtain a kingdom and wisdom'—Vāmana and Paraśurāma;

(e) 'to enjoy happiness and increase of *dharma*—' Rāma;

(f) 'to attain soverignty over the whole earth'—Balarāma;

(g) 'to enjoy pleasures, supremacy, happiness and satisfaction'—Kṛṣṇa ; and

(h) 'to effect the obstruction of the flood of evil'—Kalkī.[27]

The 'theory of incarnations' was known in Bengal since the early times. The 'incarnatory forms', as current in Bengal, were not much different from those prevalent in other regions. The extant epigraphic evidences clearly show that the said theory was in existence from the 5th century A.D. For example, we may refer to the *Belāva copper plate* of Bhojavarman, *Bhuvaneśvara Praśasti* of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, *Bāngaṛh copper plate* of Mahīpāla I and the *Kamauli grant* of Vaidyadeva, wherein the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu has been invoked.

Representations of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu in small plaques, made of stone or metal or terracotta, and in miniatures or panels have been found all over Bengal.

In Bengal, representations of the three *Avatāras*, viz. Vāmana, Varāha and Nṛsiṁha, were preponderous.

Let us now see, how far these incarnations were popular and how many images of each of them were known in Bengal.

(1) *Varāha*—The popularity of the Varāha incarnation of Viṣṇu is evident from the discovery of a large number of images (between *cir.* 10th-12th cent. A.D.) in Bengal proper. Of these, some have come from East Bengal, and others from the districts of Burdwan and Murshidabad in West Bengal. They are now housed in the *Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum* (Calcutta) and *Varendra Research Society Museum.* Most of these images follow the *dhyānamantras,* given in the *Agni* and *Matsya purāṇas.* The images of Varāha, found at Bihar, are similar in representation to those of Bengal. The extant images of this deity have also been found from various parts of India (Eran, Udaygiri, Badāmi, Ellora &c.). Different forms of Varāha, viz. Ādi-Varāha, Bhū-Varāha, Pralaya-Varāha and Yajña-Varāha have been described in the

purāṇas. Both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms of Varāha have been discovered from Bengal.

Images of Varāha, carved in anthropomorphic form yet with a boar-head (sometimes looking like a conchshell), are shown as holding usual attributes in four hands. The god stands in the *ālīḍha* pose. Among the attending deities, mention may be made of Bhūdevī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Bhūdevī or the Earth Goddess, to whom Varāha looks affectionately, is shown as seated upon the upper left elbow of the god. Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are shown as standing to the right and left sides respectively of the god. (Śeṣa-) nāga and his wife are shown as touching the right and left foot of the deity. Garuḍa takes his stand beneath the lotus pedestal. For example, we may refer to the Varāha image from Silimpur of *cir.* 10th century A.D. A unique example of the zoomorphic representation of a colossal Varāha bearing also an inscription, has come from Eran. Sometimes, the zoomorphic form of Varāha is shown side by side. For example, we may refer to some images found from East Bengal and North Bengal. In them, a small boar is shown as being engaged in the task of digging up the earth with his tusk between the two legs of god Varāha represented in anthropomorphic form.

We would be failing in our duties, if we forget to mention the characteristics of the Varāha images found in the district of Murshidabad. In them, the deity is shown as standing on the coils of a *nāga-dampatī* and wearing a *kirīṭa*. A *naga* is shown as covering its head. Earth goddess, a boar, Garuḍa and the usual attributes of Viṣṇu are also shown. According to some texts, these (images) may as well stand for Hṛṣīkeśa or Varāha.

(2) *Vāmana*—The mythology of Vāmana incarnation was quite well-known in ancient Bengal (*cf. v. 14* of *Monghyr copper plate* of Devapāla & *v. 3*, of *Bhāgalpur c.p.* of Nārāyaṇapāla). Images of this god have been found in

various parts of India (at Bādāmī, Mahābalīpuram, Ellora and Rāipur, *cir*. 6th-8th Cent. A. D.).

Separate images of Vāmana are very rare; and even when they are found, they are always shown as four-armed. The *Asutosh Museum* contains one such image (*cir*. 11th cent. A. D.), where the deity is shown as a pot-bellied one. This incarnation has been referred to in some inscriptions of the Pāla-Sena times (*cf. v. 10, Ānuliā c. p.* & v. 7. *Mādhāinagar c. p.*, where Bali and the 'three steps' of Vāmana have been mentioned). Three images of this incarnation have been found from Munshiganj, Jordeul and Rāmpāl in the Dacca district, which are now being preserved in the *Dacca Museum*. The deity is shown in these images as having four hands with usual attributes in them. The left leg is raised towards the sky, thereby indicating the famous 'third step' of the god (Trivikrama). The scene of Bali's gift is represented below. The attending deities and worshipping couple are also shown. Though prescribed in the *Matsya* and *Agnipurāṇas*, the deity is not shown here as holding any umbrella or goblet. One of the images bears an inscription of the 11th-12th century A. D. with the reading '*namo Vāmanāya*'.

(3) *Narasiṁha*—Images of Narasiṁha incarnation are not rare in Bengal, and they date from the Gupta period. The deity is always shown in the theriomorphic form. Images of this deity have been discovered from places like Ellora, Bādāmī and Siṁhācalam.

There are inscriptional references to show that Narasiṁha was worshipped in Bengal during the time of Kāntideva (c. 8th century) of the Deva dynasty and the Pāla-Sena times. For example, we may refer to *v. 6* of the *Chittagong c. p.* of Kāntideva, *v. 29* of *Bhuvaneśvara Praśasti* of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, and the *Govindapur* and *Mādhāinagar Grants* of Lakṣmaṇasena. In the last two inscriptions, the Sena king has been styled a *parama-Nārasiṁha*.

The Narasiṁha images, belonging to the Pāla-Sena times, have been discovered from the eastern as well as the northern

parts of Bengal, comprising the districts of Dacca, Dinajpur and Rajshahi. The images of this incarnation generally follow the directions given in the *Matsya purāṇa*, and the deity is usually shown as having four-arms with the exception of the Tāṅgībāḍī image which has six-arms. Of the four-arms, two are in the *abhaya* and *tarjanī mudrās*, while the rest are engaged in tearing open the entrails of Hiraṇyakaśipu. Scenes of the demon-king expostulating with Prahlāda and the emergence of Nṛsiṁha from the pillar are shown respectively on the left and right, while a crowned prostrate figure is shown under the leg of the *avatāra*.

Besides the aforesaid ones, other images of the deity belonging to an earlier period (*circa* 7th-8th century A. D.), has been found from Kuldihā in 24 Parganas district.

The Pāikore (Birbhum District) image of Nṛsiṁha tallies well with the aforesaid ones. In it, various scenes depicting the story of this incarnation are illustrated.

(4) *Matsya*—That the Matsya and Kūrma incarnations were not very popular in Bengal is evident from the paucity of separate images of these two deities. It has already been mentioned that the *Fish legend* is referred to in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Matsya, Agni* and *Bhāgavata purāṇas*. An image of *Matsyāvatāra* of exquisite artistic merit has been found at Vajrayoginī in the district of Dacca. In it, the deity appears as a half-man and half-fish (lower part). The deity is four-armed, and is being attended by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.

(5) *Kūrma*—Separate images of Kūrma and Matsya are very rare. They are generally represented on the *Daśāvatāra* slabs and on the Viṣṇu images in Bengal. The *Vīradeva Praśasti* has referred to this *Avatāra* (v. 6).

(6) *Paraśurāma*—The *Paraśurāma* incarnation was very popular in Bengal and the inscriptional evidences testify to this. For example, we may refer to the *Bādāl Pillar inscription* of Gurava Miśra (*v.* 18) and the *Naihāṭi c.p. ins.* of Vallālasena (*v.* 9.), where this militant *Brāhmaṇa* has been

described as the destroyer of the *Kṣatriyas* and suppressor of rebellious spirit respectively.

Though, Paraśurāma is shown as a two-armed deity in the *Daśāvatāra* slabs, the *Agnipurāṇa* (*ch. 49, v. 5*) assigns *paraśu, khaḍga, bāṇa* and *dhanu* in his four hands. The Rānīhāṭi image (Dacca) shows this *Avatāra* carrying three common attributes of Viṣṇu, viz. *śaṁkha, cakra, gadā* and *paraśu* (peculiar to him); Garuḍa is shown as usual.

(7) *Rāma* (*Dāśarathī*)—The *cult of Rāma* was very popular in Bengal and North India and is still a living faith in some regions thereof.

In Bengal, the story of Rāma incarnation was prevalent even in the 6th century A. D. The story of Rāma and his exploits, described in the epics and the *purāṇas*, were well-known in ancient Bengal. Plastic representations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* scenes in the Pāhāḍpur panels may go back to the late Gupta period. Not only the artist of Pāhāḍpur of the late Gupta age, but other such artists of the medieval Bengal also, took great delight in carving these scenes.

There are epigraphic references to show that the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* was very popular in Bengal ; and the people of all rank heard the recitation and exposition of the text of this epic with reverence (cf. the *Chittagong c. p.* of Kāntideva and the *Manahali c. p.* of Madanapāla). The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the various exploits of the hero, including the *Setubandha*, have also been referred to in the *Khalimpur c. p.* of Dharmapāla, *Monghyr c. p.* of Devapāla, *Bāngaḍh c. p.* of Mahīpāla, I, *Bādāl c. p.* of Gurava Miśra, *Kamauli c. p.* of, Vaidyadeva, the *Deopārā c. p.* of Vijayasena and *Edilpur c. p.* of Keśavasena. In the *Bāngaḍh c. p.*, Rāma has been described as 'the keeper of the view of truth'. The aforesaid epigraphic records show that Rāma was held in high esteem in ancient Bengal.

A unique image of Rāma along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, belonging to the Pāla period, has been discovered from Gayeshpur in the district of Rajshahi. Here, Rāma is shown

as an archer, standing on a low plinth held by Hanūmāna. Right and left sides of the deity are occupied respectively by archer Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, shown as holding a rosary of beads and a lotus respectively.

(8) *Balarāma*—The *cult of Kṛṣṇa* was equally popular in ancient Bengal. Kṛṣṇa is regarded as the God Himself, i. e., the Principal God, from whom other incarnations emanate. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are the two brothers, who descended to this earth in order to chastise the wicked and keep up the view of truth. The plastic representations of the exploits of the two deities can be seen in the Pāhāḍpur panels.

Single images of Balarāma have also been found in Bengal. The image of the four-armed Balarāma, found from Dinajpur District, represents the deity in a *tribhaṅga* pose under a trifolio arch. The deity, who stands under a canopy of five serpent-hoods, is shown as holding a cup and a club in the upper and lower right hands, and plough in the upper left while the rest is on the knee.

Another very beautiful image of Balarāma, hailing from Vikrampur in the district of Dacca and belonging to an early period, shows the sparsely decorated deity in a *tribhaṅga* pose and carrying a plough in the lower right hand and *śaṅkha*, *cakra* and *gadā* in the rest. Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī stand to the left and right sides respectively of the deity.

The Bāghrā (Dacca district) image of Balarāma is an ordinary figure of Viṣṇu *minus* the lotus and *plus* the plough. An umbrella is shown over the head of this deity.

Two other images of Balarāma, found at Pāhāḍpur and Rājshāhī respectively, are similar to the above but differ in essential points.

(9) *Buddha*—The inclusion of the Buddha in the list of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu is not an incident of remote past. He was admitted into the Hindu pantheon probably in the Gupta age. Several *purāṇas*, including the *Matsya*, describe this ninth incarnation of Viṣṇu. He has also been mentioned in the *Dharmaparīkṣā Amitagīti*. The Buddha was

probably included in the stereotyped list of ten incarnations, which was followed in Bengal, in the Pāla times. Śrīharṣa and Jayadeva have included the Buddha in their respective lists. Sculptural representations of the Buddha as one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu (cf. the Sīrpur image *circa* 8th c. A.D.).

(10) *Kalkī*—The epics and *purāṇas* describe this incarnation of Viṣṇu, who will be born as the son of Brahman in order fo punish the infidels. But, he is yet to come. During the Sena period, Kalkī was included in the list of incarnations of Viṣṇu (cf. the *Daśāvatāra* vs. of Jayadeva).

Viṣṇupaṭṭas—Sometimes, the incarnations of Viṣṇu are represented on one side of a square slab or a metal plaque (in rare cases of terracottas also) with the figure of Viṣṇu in the centre and the attending deities like Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī and *vāhana*-Garuḍa on the other. No special name for these slabs is forthcoming, but Bhattashali[28] has rightly designated them as *Viṣṇupaṭṭa* on the analogy of Jaina *Āryapaṭṭas* (*Āyāgapaṭas*). The *Viṣṇupaṭṭas* or slabs with representations of Viṣṇu with his attending deities on one side and those of incarnations on the other side were discovered from various parts of East Bengal.

The Tāṅgibārī slab has the representations of Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Rāma, Paraśurāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalkī.

The Vikrampur slab contains the sculptures of the ten incarnations in similar order.

The Raghurāmpur slab depicts Trivikrama form in place of Paraśurāma. Another slab from the same place represents Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana-Trivikrama, Paraśurāma (with club), Rāma, the Buddha and Kalkī. There is no representation of Balarāma, however, in it. In another slab, two representations of Rāma with arrow and Paraśurāma with *paraśu* may be seen.

Stone slabs, discovered from Dinajpur district, contain figures of Nṛsiṁha, Vāmana, Rāma, Balarāma, Paraśurāma and the Buddha.

Some of the Viṣṇu images, discovered from various parts of Bengal, contain miniature representations of the stereotyped ten incarnations.

Most of the *Viṣṇupaṭṭas*, mentioned above, are being preserved in the *Dacca Museum*.[29] They are carved on square black stone. Figures of incarnations are carved in low-relief on both sides. Sometimes, the *obverse* side of the same is divided into seven compartments, sometimes again into 25; but nine is the usual number. In the *reverse* side, there is generally a representation of a ten-petalled lotus in relief. Mention may be made here of six such *Viṣṇupaṭṭas* discovered from various parts of East Bengal and now being preserved in the *Dacca Museum*.

The *Viṣṇupaṭṭas* are no doubt specimens of inferior sculpture being the work of novices; and they were kept in large numbers in the Viṣṇu temple in order to be sold to poorer devotees or pilgrims at cheap rates. These were meant for being carried away to the homes of the devotees as mementoes and were usually hung on the mud-walls of their dwellings as sacred objects to receive occasionally domestic worship. The custom was found in a living form a few years ago at Dhāmrāi in the district of Dacca.

In the foregoing pages, we have dealt with the variant types of images of Viṣṇu and his *Avatāras*, which have been found in Bengal and its suburbs. It has also been shown that for some reasons or other, images of the Gupta as well as of pre-Gupta periods could rarely be found in the aforesaid regions. Before detailing the chief characteristics of the Pāla-Sena sculptures, it may be pointed out that they are mostly carved out either in black basalt or in black chlorite and are modelled in the round. However, the characteristic features of aforesaid sculptures are summarized below[30]:

(a) earthly in movement and in expression ;

(b) translation of inner-state of mind into postures evolving from the Gupta norm ;

(c) vigorousness as well as sensuousness vibrating through limbs and glances;

(d) lavishness and gracefulness as can be noticed in the soft-modelling of images;

(e) fleshiness, i.e. realism and justice to the matter of stone;

(f) inert and over-laden heaviness;

(g) artistic hardening;

(h) triangular mouth with cornea raised high into the cheeks; and

(i) relief, independent from its background.

Regarding other distinguishing features of the Pāla-Sena sculptures, it may be interesting to note that the deity wears a conical and low *kirīṭa-mukuṭa*, and stands on *pañcaratha* or *saptaratha* pedestal (which is sometimes scrolled) in the *abhaṅga* or *ābhaṅga* or in the *samabhaṅga* pose, while his body rests against a pointed stelae and ornamented back slab carved in the style of a *makara-toraṇa*. The top of the slab is marked with an ornamented *kīrttimukha*, while in earlier images of this period the floral design appears. Besides scrolls and foliages, the stelae is marked with the *Gaja-Śār-dula* motif in relief. Sometimes, Jayā and Vijayā and other deities like Brahmā, Śiva and Gaṇeśa are shown along with the usual attending figures.

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Appendix B

1 See, Schrader's *Introduction to Pañcarātra and Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā*, p. 10 ff.; 43-46; Rao, *E.H..I, Vol 1. Pt. 1*, p. 234 ff.

2 Rao, *ibid., Vol I, Pt. I*, pp. 17-19.

3 *Dacca History of Bengal, Vol. 1.* pp. 430-440.

4 Rao, *op. cit., Vol. 1, Pt. 1*, p. 17.

5 For this consult, *Pratimā-Pratiṣṭhāpana* section of *Bṛhat Saṁhitā; Hayaśīrṣa Pañcarātra*—in *Saṁkarṣaṇakāṇḍa* and *Saurakāṇḍa; 19th Vilāsa* or *Srīmūrtti-pratiṣṭhā* of *Haribhakti-vilāsa*; also see, *Pratimāsthāpana* Chapters in different *purāṇas*, viz. *Agni, Matsya, Bhaviṣya* &c.

6 Grierson in *J.R.A.S.*, 1908; Stella Kramrisch, *Rūpam, no. 40*, 1929, p. 4.

7 See, Sudhakara Dwivedi's edition of *Bṛhat Saṁhitā.*

8 Dr. V. S. Agrawal, *ibid*, pp. 8-9; also see, *D.H.B.*, Vol. I.

9 For the seals, see the relevant portion of *Chapter I* of this work.

10 M. Chakraverty, *J.A.S.B.*, 1908: French, *Art of the Pāla Empire of Bengal*, p. 3 ff.; R. D. Banerjee, *Eastern Indian School of Medineval Sculpture* (*E.I.S.M.S.*), pp. 23-24. 39 ff.

11 Stella Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

12 *Ibid*, p. 7.

13 *Ibid*, p. 4.

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17 *Ibid*, p. 4.

18 *Ibid*, p. 4.

19 *Ibid*, p. 136; see also, Bhattasali's book.

20 *Ibid*, pp. 18 ff., 41ff.; 130 ff.

21 *Ibid*, pp. 87 ff.; 101-07.

22 *Ibid*. p. 127 ff.

23 *Ibid*, p. 127.

24 For a detailed discussion of the *Daśāvatāras* of Viṣṇu and their images, see T.A.G. Rao's *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. 1, Pt. I, p. 39ff., 154 ff; J. N. Banerjea's article in *J.I.S.O.A., Vol. 13*, pp. 74 ff. & *Vol. 14*, pp. 1-34, 35 ff.; Hopkin's *Epic Mythology*, p. 210

ff. ; J. Gonda's *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 124 ff. ; N. K. Bhattasali, *op. cit.*. pp. 93-107 ; Dr. Kamala Ray, *I.H.Q.*, Vol. 17. p. 370 ff. See also, *Memoirs, Handbooks, Guidebooks* or *Hand-outs* published by *V.R.S.M.* & *V.S.P.M.*

25 J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 147 ; van der Leeuw, *Religion* etc. *Chap. 81*, quoted in Gonda's Book.

26 See, J. N. Banerjea's Chapter in the *Religion of the Hindus* (ed. K. W. Morgan), 1953, New York, p. 55 ff. ; also see, Gonda, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 21, 96, 108 ff., 124 ff.

27 Gonda, *ibid*, p. 243 ; see, T.A.G. Rao's *Elements of Hindu Iconography* ; Vol. 1, *Pt. I*, pp. 39 ff., 154 ff., 234 ff.

28 N. K. Bhattasali, *op. cit.*, p. 89 ff.

29 *Ibid*, p. 89 ff. ; and *Plates*, xxxv— I and xxxv— II.

30 Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 4 ff. ; French, *op. cit.*, p. 3 ff.; also see, R. D. Banerjee's *E.I.S.M.S.*, pp. 2, 13 ff., 18 ; M. Ganguly's *Hand-book of Sculptures in the V.S.P.M.* ; and *D. H. B.*, Vol. I, p. 535 ff.

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ERRATA

N.B. : Punctuation marks, wrongly printed, are not included here.

Page	Line	For	Read
5	16	*inscriptions*	*inscription*
5	22	*Pabbhosā*	*Pabhosā*
10	35	of Viṣṇu	Viṣṇu
14	29	Vlśvavarman	Viśvavarman
14	33	*Vjṣṇo*	*Viṣṇo*
15	1	*jnscription*	*inscription*
15	25	Skand; *Bhiṭari*	Skanda; *Bhiṭari*
20	11	Lokanātha (i.e.).	Lokanātha.
29	14	*Burkikhār*	*Buṛhîkhār*
29	44	*Aparimitain*	*Aparimitaṁ*
30	f.n. 48	Add after line	See also Sircar's view in *Sel. Inss.* (2nd edn.), p.384 f.n.
31	f.n. 73	Add after last line	The revised date is 558 A.D.
32	6	Rātā	Rāta
32	8	Pāla	Rāta
32	40	*Jauṣkara*	*Pauṣkara*
36	6	images.	times.
38	22	Crturviṁśati	Caturviṁśati
39	22	Mahīpāla	Mahīpāla I
46	33	According to Sandhyākara Nandin, the commentator	According to Dr. R.G. Basak, the editor (Beng. Edn.),
49	30-33	Delete the last sentence of para 2	
52	17	Govidapāla	Govindapāla
52	30	hinted at	hinted at, again

Page	*Line*	*For*	*Read*
52	34	of Śrī-Hari	or Śrī-Hari.
58	27	inportance	importance
58	34	extent	extant
75	22	Jaṭaka *Jaṁi*	Toṭaka *Gāṁi*
76	31	foregotten	forgotten
77	35	four	five
78	1-2	Vāsu Deva and	Vāsu Deva, Daśaratha Deva and
79	6	*Dānuja-Mādhava*	*Danuja-Mādhava*
83	25	*Bhāgavat-tattva*	*Bhagavat-tattva*
106	1	*Śrīmadhāgaaata*	*Śrimad-bhāgavata*
106	3	Harīśvara'	Harirīśvara'
110	24	Jayacandra	Jaya (or Jayanta) candra
110	24	1184	1194
111	9	*kalāgach*	*kalāgāch*
139	26	*Śrīkṛṇavijaya*	*Śrīkṛṣṇa-vijaya*
146	12	*Smṛi*	*Smṛti*
150	19	*candrikā*	*candrikā* as
150	23	gave a *MS.*	gave a *MS.* of
152	33	fallowing	following
155	5	Mādhava	Madhva
162	33	despoptic	despotic
167	12	Pratāparudra, the king of	king Pratāparudra of
182	7	*ādisūtradhārā*	*ādi-sūtradhāra*
184	3	south	south[2]
185	8	*Āḷvārs*[6]	*Āḷvārs*[3]
185	14	portons)	portions)
195	13	'Rādhābhava'	'Rādhāhava',
215	28	*Bādāl c.p.*	*Bādāl pillar ins.*

